No. 271 / SEPTEMBER 1995

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST

coffee

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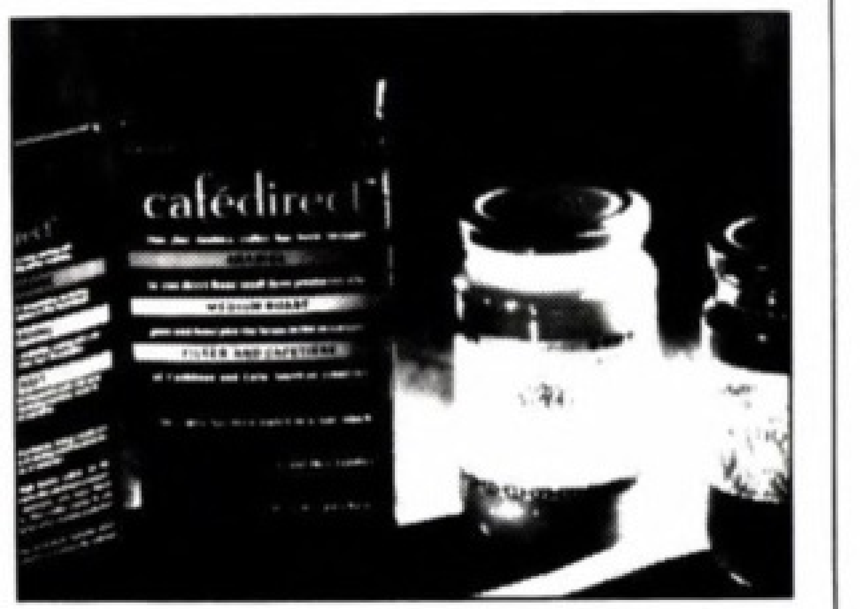

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Sally Mugabe
Esther Boohene
IN CELEBR ION OF WOMEN

"Life is not long:
-desire and aspiration
Life is not long:
-its mingled rue and races,
Souls—scabbing pain, sweet laughter,
bitter tears.
Its hopes, its paths, till the twilight closes.
Blessed be God.
May we have the pleasure and liberty of
wishing you the compliments of the season."

Sarah Francesca & Esther Sophia Hayfron
Birthday greatings from June 6, 1948

JOIN

The "In Celebration of Women..." Project:- a tribute to the Late Mrs. Sally Mugabe, First Lady and Founder of Zimbabwe Child Survival, and her late twin sister, Dr. Esther Boohene, Senior Population and AIDS Specialist to the World Bank.

PLEASE

donate to the ("In Celebration of Women in Memory of Sally Mugabe and Esther Boohene") project of The Zimbabwe Child Survival and Development Foundation.

HELP

us to remember our founders through a celebration of women. Help us to culminate this celebration with longterm efforts to further social development.
We are making steps to eradicate absolute poverty, to educate about AIDS, curb illegal migration, and thus, to decrease hopelessness amongst Africans.

At this time, the In Celebration of Women Project, would like to remember Sally Mugabe and Esther Boohene through an international exhibition of photographs, highlighting some strongpoints in their careers—We would like to celebrate these 2 inspiring women by including 43 other women from around the world, who have made important contributions to social development.
In addition, the project committee is organizing an Art Competition which invites, young African artists to create awareness about the chances of human survival and development in Africa, the AIDS epidemic, as well as to discern and express how strong women are percieved by society. The best portrayals will be included in the exhibition, to compliment the mentioned photographs. The exhibition will travel through 14 countries worldwide.

The exhibition itself, serves as an instrument for long-term fundraising, and to create a dialouge with the international community concerning development. Please help the underdeveloped world to help itself.

In Celebration of Women

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under the protectorate of the Zimbabwe Child Survival and Development Foundation (Mobilisation of Writers, Artists and Intellectual Workers)
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Resident Coordinator: Abigail Vera, Announcement Design: Nanaadj Boohene/Sarah Hahn - Art Center College of Design (Europe)
Other project staff: Francisca Veenendaal, Julia Dupont Parker, Amelia Richards, SuSu Durst, Nonie van der Munnik.

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Contact David Talbot for further details on tel: 0181 943 7713, fax: 0181 977 6552 or email dwt@tearfund.dircon.co.uk

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH: ABRAHAM WITH SACKS OF CHARUYO CO-OPERATIVE PARCHMENT COFFEE AND A PILE OF COFFEE CHERRIES IN SAN JUAN DEL ORO BY **DARRAN REES**
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **IAN NIXON**

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Coffee

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

THE plan was to follow the trail of the coffee bean from the plant to the pot. But a bean cannot speak. So we decided to try and find a coffee farmer who would agree to make the long journey with me. If the bean, the farmer and I travelled the same route we'd be crossing the gulf that separates producers from consumers and perhaps stand a better chance of finding fresh insights into how the coffee trade works.

That, at any rate, was the plan. Nothing, of course, went as we intended. We chose Peru at the last minute because this was where the beans were being harvested at this time of year. Darran Rees, a photographer, joined me at the last minute. And it was not until I arrived in Peru that I learned that the farmer who was due to come back with me to Britain couldn't make it after all.

The picture you see here shows Darran at work with his camera under the white cloth on the right. Some of his remarkable photographs appear in this magazine. I am on the left at the end of the road and – like the mules – near the end of my tether after hours of travelling up and down steep mountains. In the centre is Gregorio Gomez, vice-president of the coffee co-op CECOVASA, who took us round. When this photo was taken, by Abdon 'Maestro' Martínez, I thought that Gregorio and I would be parting company for good shortly afterwards.

But, back in Oxford, my co-editors thought we should not abandon the original plan entirely. So I telephoned CECOVASA's office in Lima and a message was sent on by short-wave radio to Gregorio. Within a couple of days the reply came back. Gregorio would come to England because I was now his friend – and when a friend asks a favour you must respond – although his parents would worry and he was in the middle of the coffee harvest on his farm.

When he turned up in London a few days later I'd had no time to arrange anything for his stay. Having translated for Darran in Peru from Spanish to English, I was now translating for Gregorio from English to Spanish. An unfamiliar form of 'culture shock' began to afflict me, an occasional uncertainty as to quite where I was or what I was supposed to be doing. In the end this seemed to matter less than the fact that I was with Gregorio almost all the time.

We got to know each other pretty well during the two weeks that followed. On a couple of occasions we sat down and recorded a formal conversation or interview. But for the most part we simply chatted about this and that, tried not to talk about coffee, or travelled in silence.

Gregorio is now back in Peru. I have no idea when we shall meet again. And yet this magazine feels to me as if it belongs to him. Almost everything I experienced was in some way mediated through him, and although I would not claim to have seen things through his eyes, sometimes I felt as if that was what was happening. I think of him now on his farm in the Tambopata Valley, and wonder how far the distance between us has closed.

David Ransom

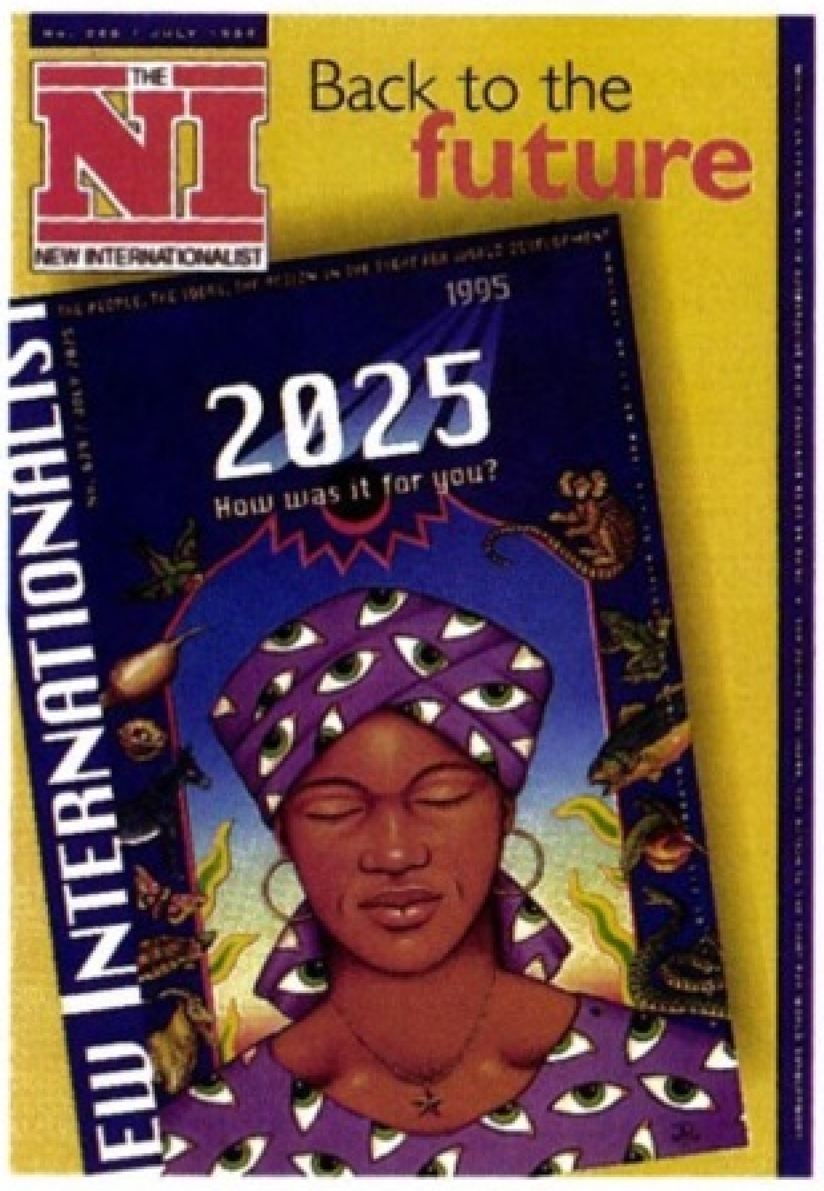
David Ransom
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Gaia

I was interested to read the diverse range of possible 'Futures' in your issue (***Back to the Future* NI 269**). Kirkpatrick Sale seems to have fallen into the trap of believing that 'Gaia' is an earth mother who can be prayed to.



James Lovelock, who proposed the Gaia Hypothesis, does not imply this at all. He uses the idea of Gaia to describe the Earth as a complicated organism with its own biochemistry and circulatory system. This does not mean that we can pray to Gaia any more than our livers can pray to us to stop drinking, or our lungs can pray that we stop smoking.

Janet Moxley
West Calder, Scotland

Bruce Harris

Readers of the *Interview* (**NI 269**) on Bruce Harris should know that for reasons of security, any correspondence should go to Covenant House Latin America, SJO 1039, PO Box 025216, Miami, Florida 33102-5216, US.

Could you also point out that there is an English Support group for Bruce Harris at Caza Alianza (Covenant House), The Coach House, Grafton Underwood, Kettering, Northants NN14 3AA.

John Bowles
Sandbach, England

Still rife

We were delighted to hear about the progress on female genital mutilation (***Heart and Soul,* NI 268**) especially your profile of Coca Maloni, a woman of power and some influence, with the capacity to change and to give up old injurious customs.

Unfortunately Burkina Faso is just one small African country and though we applaud its success, we would like to see similar good work across Africa, Indonesia and elsewhere where the practice is still rife. Forward (Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development) aims to help and support women like Coca, and to find ways for those who have not yet changed to make a livelihood by alternative means. We are also working in Western countries to train health practitioners and social workers in the necessary skills to eliminate the practice and assist survivors.

Fiona Adamson
Forward, London, England

Prozac-free

Although it undeniably keeps me well-informed, reading your magazine from cover to cover invariably leaves me feeling slightly depressed and guilty. Your issue on Sabtenga village (***Heart and Soul,* NI 268**) was a refreshing contrast. It described people I could identify and empathize with, not caricatures I might be expected to romanticize or patronize. There was the incisive political and economic analysis that we all expect from an NI article, but it was brought alive by showing the people who were affected.

Thank you for reminding us that we ordinary human beings throughout the world have the same values and priorities, and for being prepared to show progress as well as poverty, injustice and corruption. I will now be able to renew my subscription without placing a side-order for Prozac.

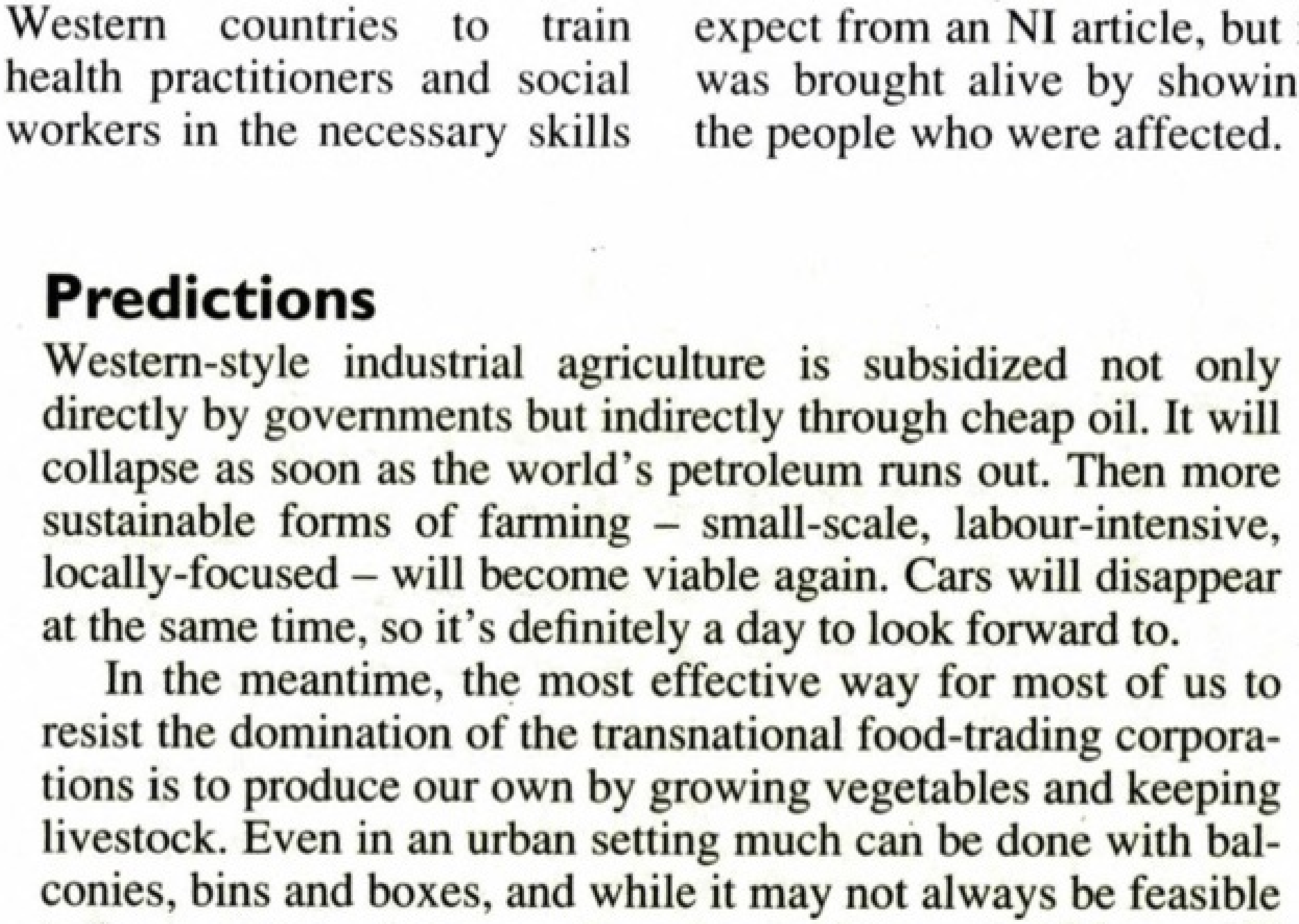
Jeremy Parsons
Bath, England

Predictions

Western-style industrial agriculture is subsidized not only directly by governments but indirectly through cheap oil. It will collapse as soon as the world's petroleum runs out. Then more sustainable forms of farming – small-scale, labour-intensive, locally-focused – will become viable again. Cars will disappear at the same time, so it's definitely a day to look forward to.

In the meantime, the most effective way for most of us to resist the domination of the transnational food-trading corporations is to produce our own by growing vegetables and keeping livestock. Even in an urban setting much can be done with balconies, bins and boxes, and while it may not always be feasible to keep a steer, sheep or pig, a few rabbits and chickens will provide meat for the table and manure for the garden. If you are unfortunate enough to live in Toronto, where the keeping of livestock is prohibited by law, you might try pigeons instead of chickens: be prepared to explain to the inspector that they're not poultry, but pets!

Bruce Inksetter
Rapide-Danseur, Québec, Canada


You and your blasted prize marrow
© Quillin

VIV QUILLIN

As it is

Like Debbie and Peter Wakeham (*Letters,* **NI 269**), I have reservations about the death penalty, particularly because of the risk of an innocent person being executed. However, there are some facts which should be noted: between 1980 and 1992 there were 14 executions in Georgia. During the same period the State's murder rate fell by 36 per cent from 17.2 per 100,000 people to 11. Meanwhile the general murder rate in the US fell by only five per cent and in New York State (which does not operate the death penalty) it rose by seven per cent during the same period.

These facts and similar statistics from other states help to explain why support for the death penalty is so strong in the US. The Wakehams would do better to abandon their idea of boycotting American products, and to contact Amnesty International, who could supply them with details of possibly innocent people sitting on death row.

As progressives interested in improving the human condition, we must live in the world as it is, not the world as we would like it to be.

Anon
Birmingham, England

Eco shrimps

Your article 'Attack of the Shrimps' in your issue on ***Hunger* (NI 267)** is accurate and timely. There is, however, another type of shrimp farming in Bangladesh which is local, labour-intensive, eco-friendly and highly profitable. Rather than flooding large tracts of land, small canals are dug along one or more sides of a rice field, and the field banks are built up above flood levels.

Each farmer owns their own shrimp unit.

Pre-monsoon, the canal is stocked with fry at Tk5 each. When the rain comes, the canal overflows across the field which has been planted with rice. The shrimp feed among the rice. Five months later the rice is ready, the waters have receded and the shrimp return to the canal, where they are fed rice husks. At six to eight months each shrimp is large enough to cover a plate and is valued at between Tk50 and Tk100. This represents a huge profit for poor Bangladeshi farmers.

The efforts of non-governmental organisations in assisting many marginal and even landless farmers in this kind of shrimp-farming are worth backing and may yield better results than challenging big businessmen and politicians.

Rob Bellingham and Bartha Hill
World Vision, Auckland,
Aotearoa/New Zealand

Human folly

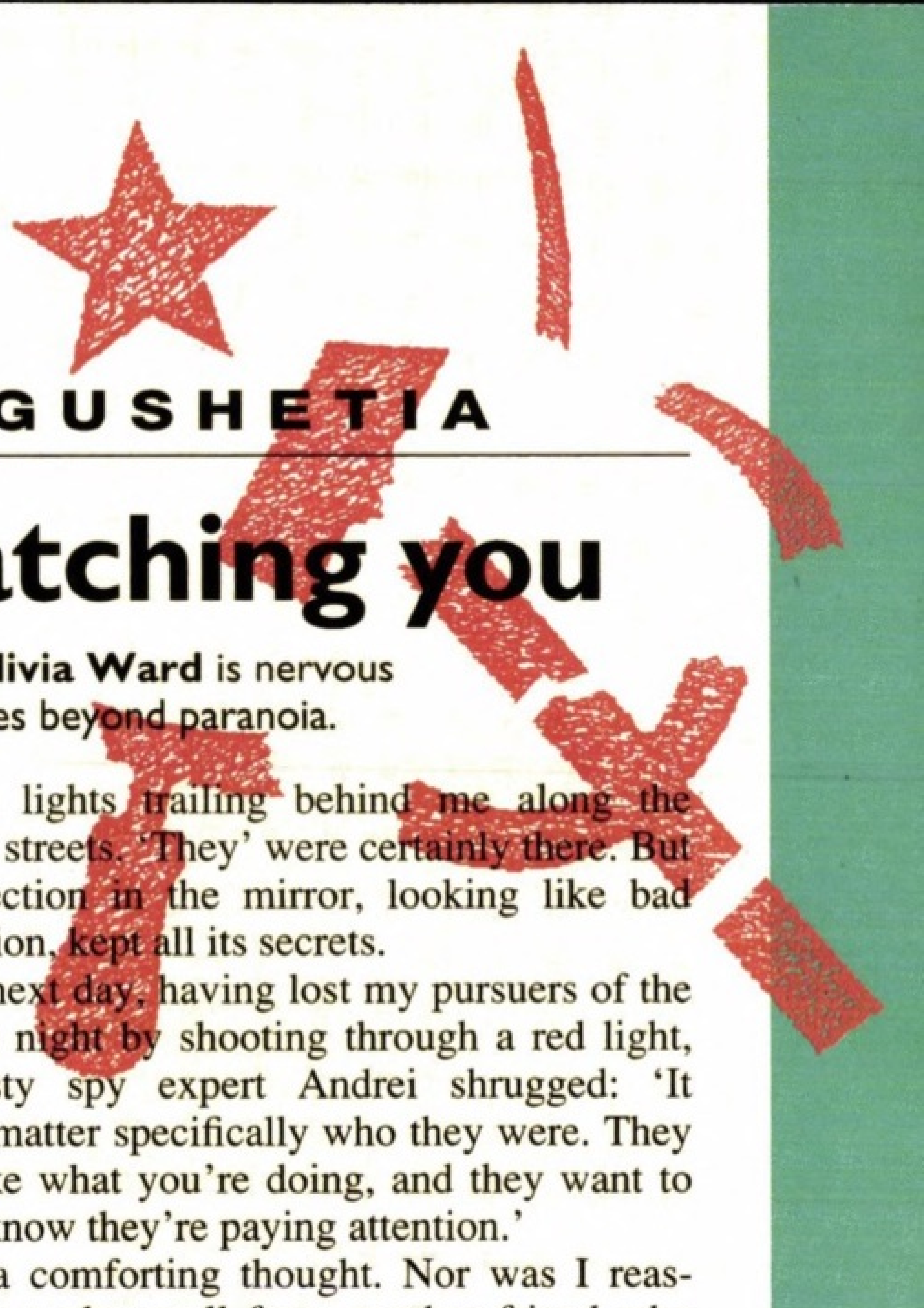
Your issue on ***Hunger*** **(NI 267)** ignored some important causes of famine. Environmental causes: global warming, for example, which is largely due to pollution, may well cause already-dry areas of the world like Ethiopia to become even drier. This results in famine due to lack of water or, in some low-lying countries like Pakistan, more flooding.

Political causes: in the Ukraine Stalin caused an artificial famine that killed seven million people. Saddam Hussein's oil slick in the Gulf damaged Saudi Arabian desalination plants and much fish and wildlife were destroyed, with its consequent impact on human life. In a more direct and horrible way, thousands have starved to death in Bosnia, and in concentration camps in China, North Korea and Iraq. War has also caused hunger in Biafra, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia and Mozambique.

Hunger in this sense is down to sheer human folly.

Jim McBurnie
Bradford, Yorkshire, England

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.



LETTER FROM INGUSHETIA

Big brother is watching you

There is no KGB in the new Russia. But **Olivia Ward** is nervous as she examines the shady world that lies beyond paranoia.

It was the third night in a row he had phoned. His scratchy voice hardly rose above a whisper. Through the static his words were blurred into a dull hum.

'I'm sorry to call you again so late. But I must see you very soon. I have to be careful because they are watching me.'

My midnight caller was not, as I first suspected, a heavy breather, or a lunatic lucky enough to have a flat with a phone. He named a mutual acquaintance, a Russian journalist with a notably level head. The problem, he hinted, was something 'they would prefer me not to divulge'.

We arranged a daylight meeting in my office. But he failed to appear. And the next night, at the same relaxed hour, my phone rang again.

'Pavel,' I said in exasperation. 'You must get a grip. How can we talk about this thing if you never show up?'

He apologized. The security guards in my building compound had questioned him at the gate. They asked for identification and papers. Who knows who they would be calling?

'That's all I can say for now. I'm sorry to be so inconvenient. I'll call again.'

MIRIAM McCURDY

Perhaps because I was tired, or because of the lateness of the hour and the sudden shock of the telephone, my mind went into overdrive.

What if 'They' were watching now? They must know whom he was calling. If he is under surveillance they know everything. Why did he choose me? Was I being set up because of things I'd written in the past?

These were Russian thoughts, and I laughed out loud at the reaction of my Western friends if they could hear them. At last, they'd say, she's retreated into Le Carré land. Been over there too long.

But few in this country would ever dismiss the vaguest inklings as mere paranoia. In Russia, history attests, paranoids do have real enemies. Many people are prepared to take essential facts and spin them into elaborate plots, involving moles, mafia and every conceivable evil-doer.

But this foreboding, the feeling of being shadowed, watched, reported on, lies on top of one's life like a dead hand.

On a snowy night last winter my hands gripped the steering wheel as I watched a car with no lights trailing behind me along the deserted streets. 'They' were certainly there. But the reflection in the mirror, looking like bad cablevision, kept all its secrets.

The next day, having lost my pursuers of the previous night by shooting through a red light, my trusty spy expert Andrei shrugged: 'It doesn't matter specifically who they were. They don't like what you're doing, and they want to let you know they're paying attention.'

Not a comforting thought. Nor was I reassured by a phonecall from another friend who had just broken a toe lunging for his pistol when he woke up to hear someone quietly picking the lock of his flat.

This, after all, is an inherited police state that has blended into a landscape of organized crime and corruption. One feeds on the other. Both feed off the body politic, weakening it as authoritarianism has done for decades.

'Things happen,' used to be a chilling phrase for KGB action. Now it can mean almost anything. After the war in Chechnya thousands of paratroopers, riot police, soldiers and ordinary troops thronged the streets of Moscow. Less visible is the army of secret service and 'special service' troops reporting to rival authorities in the Government and Kremlin.

When last year the head office of Russia's biggest bank was raided by a masked paramilitary unit that refused to identify itself, few people were surprised. It was all, they knew, part of some vast and obscure power-game being played out around them.

In big or small ways, this message gets through to the person on the street, leaving a trail of anxious, powerless people, burrowing away in their own flats behind triple locks with the very few in the world they can trust.

For the growth of democracy, this is thorny ground. Not because there is any official barrier for those who want to stand up and protest. But because the feeling of hopelessness holds back those who would join in the most basic grassroots political activity. Whoever 'They' are, they have won.

It's late now, and I haven't heard from Pavel in a week. But any minute now the phone may ring. Or is it already too late? ■

Olivia Ward is the Moscow bureau chief of the *Toronto Star*.

Update

NATIVE PEOPLES

NEILIAN GLASS

One of 500 oil drills on Lubicon land. The woman below is drying moose meat by the traditional method – part of an endangered way of life.

Drilled and pulped

Canada's Lubicon still threatened

The Lubicon Cree, native people in Canada to whom the **NI** donated part of the proceeds from its 'Native American Cards' in 1994 (see **NI 258**), are still fighting for their collective life. Based in northern Alberta, an area rich in oil, minerals and timber, the Lubicon world has been turned upside down since 1980.

Unlike some other nations, the Lubicon never signed away their land to the Canadian Government. But this has not stopped the exploitation of resources on their land. In 1980 the first road was built to facilitate the extraction of oil and gas. Almost immediately the Lubicon's age-old self-sufficient lifestyle was destroyed. Between 1980 and 1984, 400 oil and gas wells were drilled within a 25-kilometre radius of the community, driving away the wildlife they depended on. By 1990, 95 per cent of the Lubicon were dependent on welfare.

The Lubicon are now willing to give up 98 per cent of their land. In return they wish to move back to their traditional site at Lubicon Lake and to establish a reserve with a school, a health centre, a community centre and an elders' home together with housing that meets federal standards. They also claim one per cent of the estimated seven billion dollars' worth of oil and gas so far taken from their land.

In February 1994 Ron Irwin, the Minister of Indian Affairs, visited Lubicon Chief Bernard Ominayak and publicly declared that this was one of the top four aboriginal justice struggles and that the Government was committed to a speedy resolution of the problem. It then took him a year to appoint an 'independent' arbitrator for the land-rights dispute who in fact has long-term connections with the oil and gas industries in Alberta.

In 1988 the Albertan Government sold the rights to every tree in Lubicon territory to Daishowa, a Japanese multinational with a massive pulp mill on the Peace River. Up to now Daishowa has only taken salvage lumber – trees cut by the oil and gas companies in the course of their extraction. But the Lubicon fear that full-scale extraction will begin soon.

In 1994 Unocal, one of those oil-and-gas companies, built a gas processing plant less than three kilometres from Lubicon Lake. The Lubicon protested to the Energy Resources Conservation Board, which had ruled in 1986 that all oil-and-gas companies had to notify the local people and work with them. In February this year the Board gave Unocal permission to start processing gas – and formally overturned its own 1986 ruling.

In 1989 the UN Human Rights Committee found Canada to be in contravention of the convention on political and human rights. It found that it was impossible for the Lubicon to get redress through the Canadian legal system.

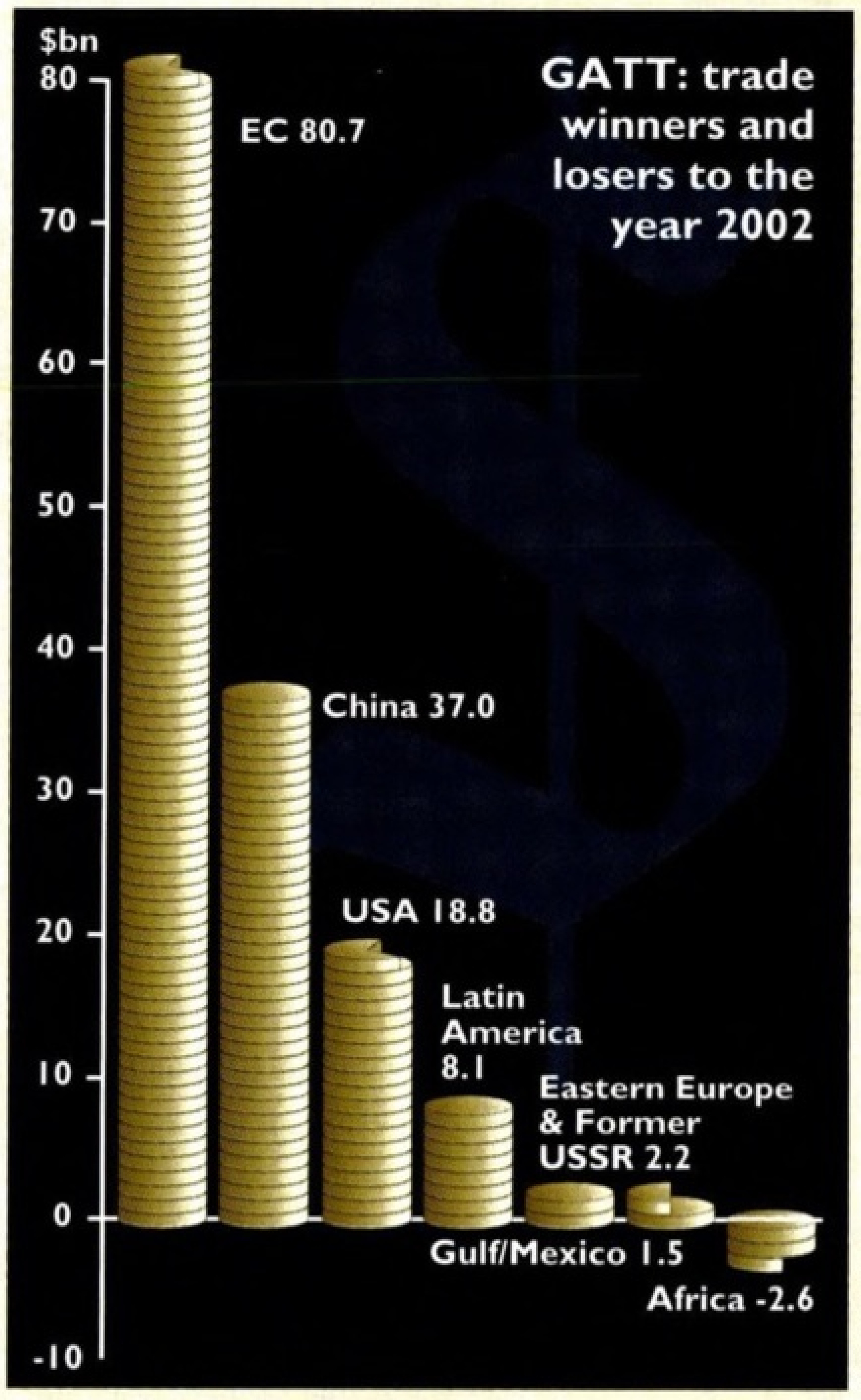
The Lubicon feel that the final push is on to eliminate them. There are only around 500 left. In recent weeks there has been an increased police presence and they are being told that they would do well to join the Woodland Cree or Loon River bands as there won't be Lubicon around for much longer. ■

Neilian Glass

Desertification – no problem

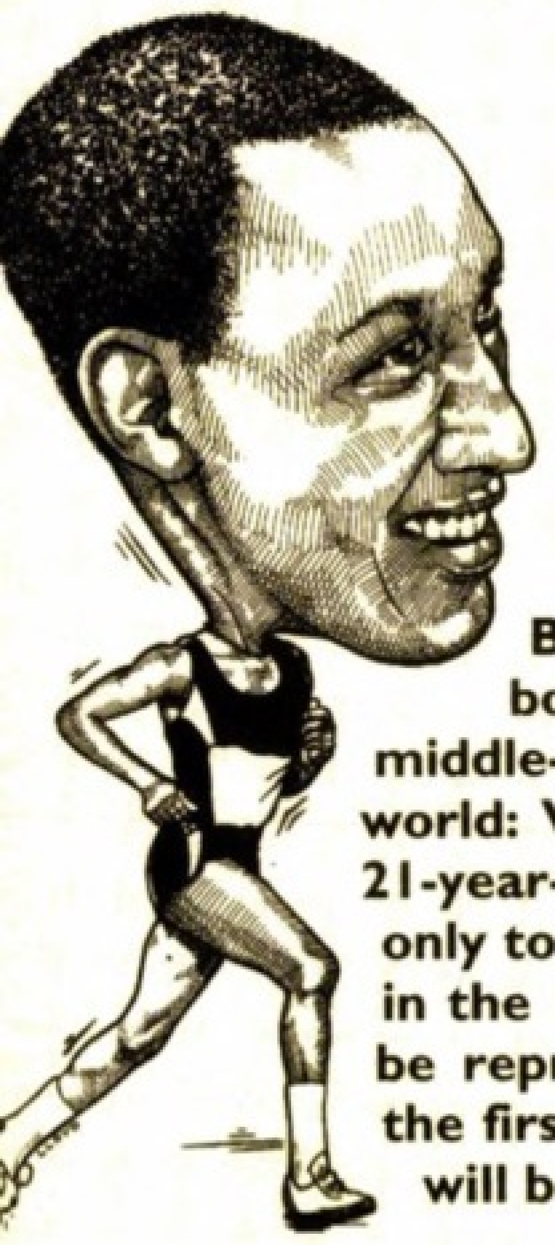
The UN Environment Programme has called for $480 billion to be spent on anti-desertification projects over the next 20 years. Right-wing British thinktank, the Institute of Economic Affairs has countered with a new report which claims that the whole idea of desertification is a nonsense. Author Julian Morris claims that the Sahara is not growing and that rising agricultural productivity in arid lands proves that deserts in general are not expanding. He believes the greatest threat in this field is the 'corrupting' effect of anti-desertification aid. His report is part of a free-market fundamentalist slant on development which dismisses fears about population growth (which just increases human efficiency and ingenuity) and environmental pollution (carbon-dioxide emissions have a fertilizing effect). Morris's solution to the world's ills is typical: the complete elimination of aid to developing countries and a more complete free market. Hmm...

The rich get richer...



IMAPRESS

The GATT agreement arrived at in the Uruguay Round will certainly increase global trade – but the benefits from that will not be fairly distributed, as the chart above shows. While the European Union will rake in the winnings, Africa will actually lose under the new rules. The chart comes from Oxfam, who have launched a worldwide campaign against poverty founded on a charter asserting that every person has a basic right to a home, clean water, enough to eat, a safe environment, protection from violence, equality of opportunity, a say in their future, an education, a livelihood and healthcare.



Olympian

Burundi, despite its problems, boasts one of the best male middle-distance runners in the world: Venuste Niyangabo. Last year 21-year-old Niyangabo was second only to Algerian Noureddine Morceli in the 1,500m rankings. Burundi will be represented in the Olympics for the first time in 1996 and Niyangabo will be going for gold.

Phil Minshull, Gemini News Service

Copped by cops

In Brazil an élite police anti-kidnapping squad raided a Rio de Janeiro slum and freed 13-year-old Paula Zamboni, only to learn that her kidnappers were Rio military police. The ensuing scandal sparked a shakeup and the head of the anti-kidnapping squad was replaced by Hélio Luz, a no-nonsense cop reputed to be immune to corruption and keen to clear up the streets of Rio. However, hopes for this were not raised when less than 30 hours after Luz was sworn in, four heavily armed men abducted Sarah Maria Lambréia, the wife of a construction-company owner. Chief Luz and his kidnapping squad did not even learn of the incident until a full eight hours later.

Time, Vol 145, No 24

False religion

Nine board members of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights are taking one of Egypt's top Muslim clerics to court over his pronouncement that 'female circumcision' – female genital mutilation – is a religious duty. The activists blame the edict by Sheik Gad al-Haq for the Egyptian Health Minister's decision to allow genital mutilation to be performed in government hospitals and clinics. They are basing their case on the 'doctrine that Islam does not sanction any practice that constitutes harm to society or human beings'.

World Press Review, Vol 42 No 7

Downtrodden to the top

Mayawati, India's first-ever female chief minister from the Harijan or 'untouchable' group – beneath the formal caste system – has assumed office in the country's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh. Her Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP, or Downtrodden People's Party) has formed a tactical alliance with the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party, the single largest party in Uttar Pradesh. The tactics seem to be an attempt to consolidate her position and win enough seats next time for her party to form a government on its own. Her government's objective is to raise the living standards of Dalits (lower-caste people) and minorities.

Rahul Bedi,
Gemini News Service

MULTINATIONALS

Big Mac in the mire

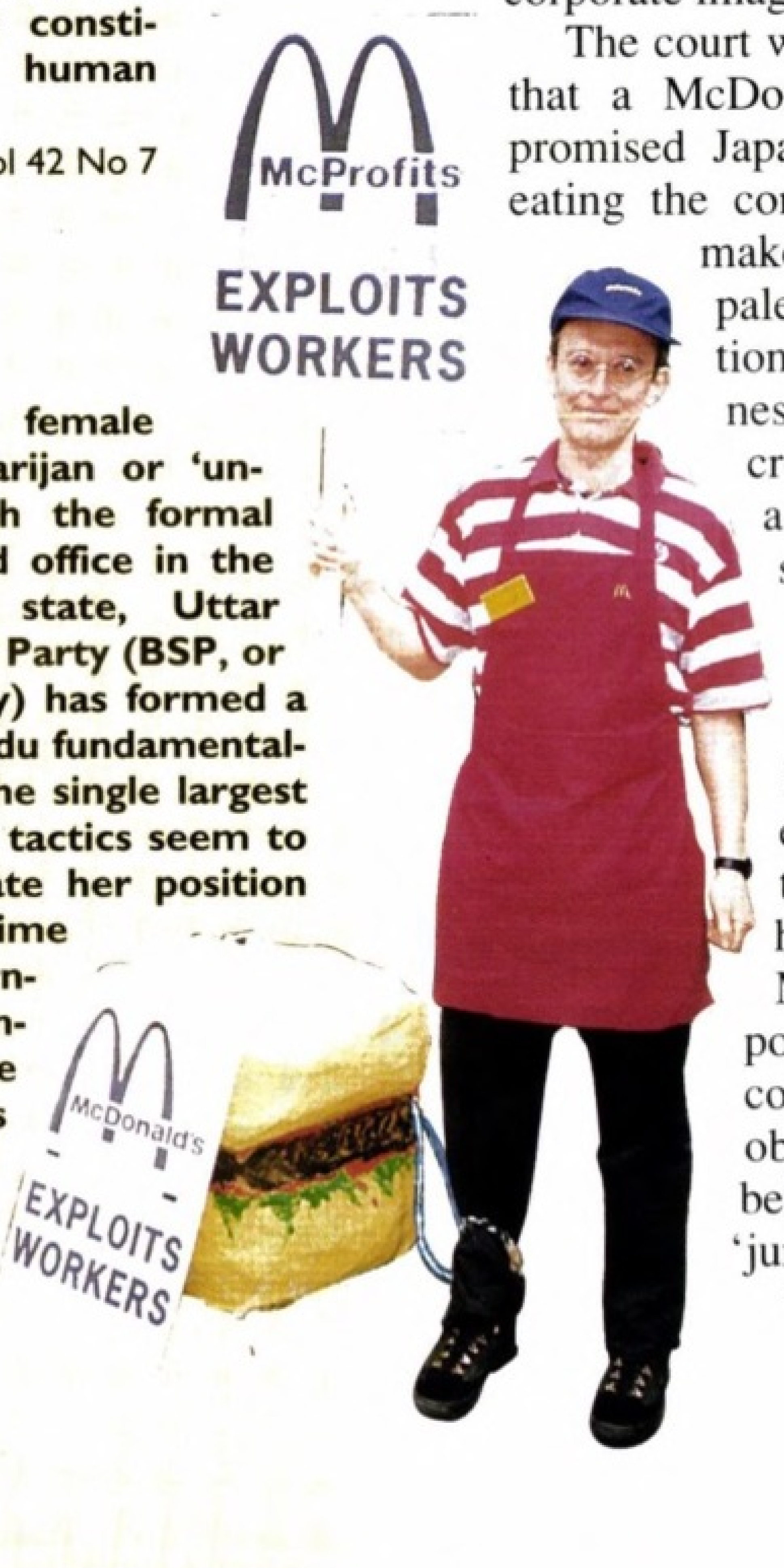
Heroic battle against the fast-food giant continues

The international campaign against the McDonald's corporation has for the last year been concentrating on the longest libel trial in British history. The case, which began on 28 June 1994 and looks set to run until March 1996, was brought by the $26-billion-a-year corporation against two unemployed activists for London Greenpeace, Helen Steel and Dave Morris.

Taking on McGoliath: Helen Steel and Dave Morris.

JANE SKINNER

The corporation has been notoriously ready to sue in the past but this time, thanks to the tenacity and determination of Steel and Morris, who have conducted their own defence, the tactic has completely backfired. The original allegations in the 1989 leaflet – which attacked the corporation's record on nutrition, employment and the environment – have been publicized all over the world. McDonald's has been forced to devote huge amounts of money (estimated at $8,000 a day) to maintaining its crack legal team and supplying a host of expert witnesses and senior executives. Yet the wounds to the corporate image grow deeper.



The court was told, for example, that a McDonald's representative promised Japanese customers that eating the company's food would make them tall, blond and pale. One of the corporation's own expert witnesses admitted under cross-examination that a diet high in fat, sugar, animal products and salt, and low in fibre, vitamins and minerals is linked to heart disease and cancer – the allegation which has most alarmed McDonald's. The corporation has stated in court that it does not object to its products being described as 'junk food'.

The recent phase of the trial has focused on employment practices. The corporation's British Vice-president, Sid Nicholson, has been forced to agree that for its employees over 21 they 'couldn't actually pay any lower wages without falling foul of the law'. He conceded that staff often mention pay as an area they would like to see improved, but said that no working person, including himself, ever felt they were paid enough. The corporation's senior managers in Britain received £75,000 ($120,000) a year plus benefits in 1993.

The case has become such a public-relations disaster that shareholders at the corporation's AGM in Chicago in May called for it to be abandoned. McDonald's has found itself in a no-win situation. The international bad publicity in the course of the trial will have far outweighed any judgement in its favour. Steel and Morris, meanwhile, despite the immense difficulties the case has caused them, will not settle out of court unless the corporation undertakes not to sue anyone making statements similar to those in the leaflet – effectively accepting the truth of their allegations.

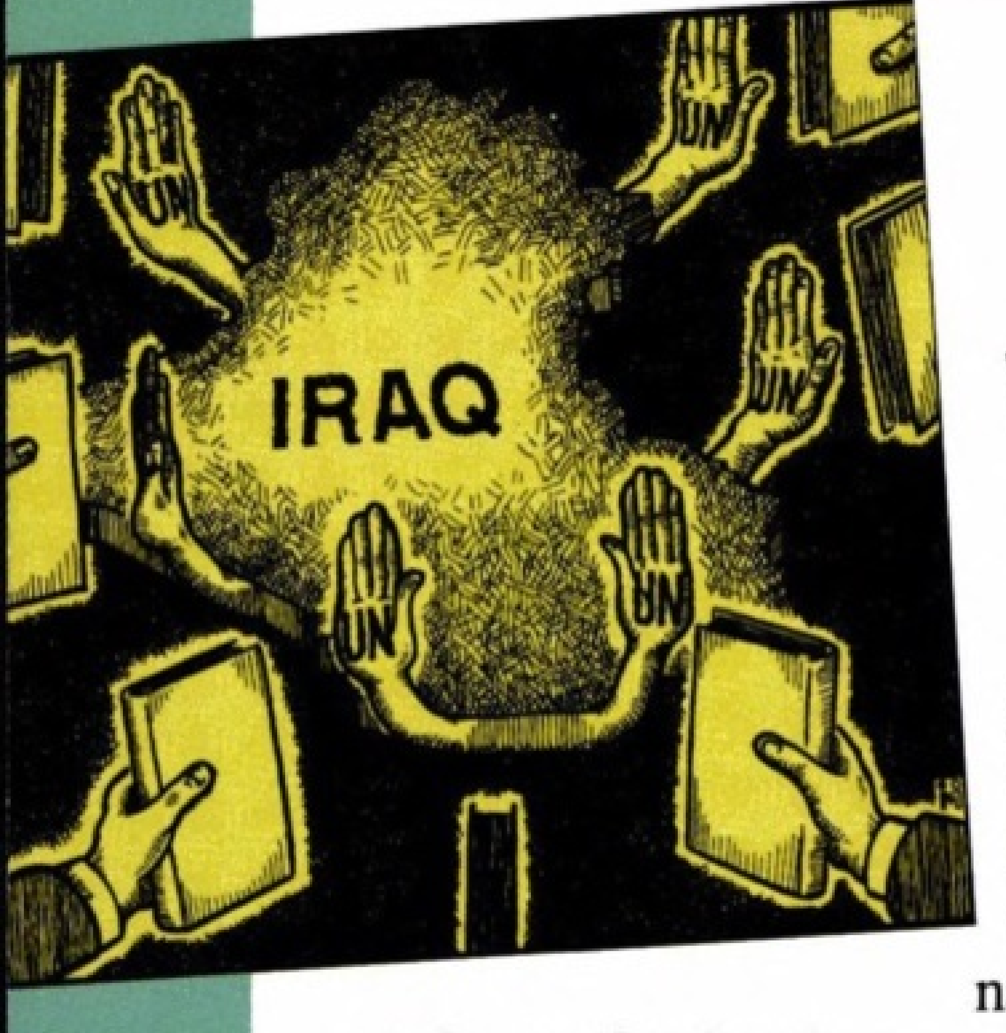
The corporation is doing its best to contain the case 'as a UK issue'. A leaked internal memo from McDonald's Australia says 'We want to keep it at arm's length, not become guilty by association'.

International protest against McDonald's is, however, growing as fast as the burger chain itself. On the corporation's 40th anniversary in April there were protests in at least 20 countries, including Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, Spain and Sweden. Steel and Morris were flown out by US supporters to a demonstration outside the corporation's first store, in Des Plaines, Illinois, which is now a museum, while in June British protesters successfully forced the abandonment of filming for McDonald's' latest TV ad, at an estimated cost of $160,000. ■

Chris Brazier

Update

UNITED NATIONS



GEMINI NEWS SERVICE

Outside history

Sanctions hit Iraqi doctors and teachers

YOUNG Iraqis can watch *Jurassic Park* and *The Lion King* on home videos but doctors cannot get medical journals. The country's professionals are incensed by the shortage of foreign books and scientific literature as a result of the UN embargo and point out that the ban is decimating human resources which, unlike bridges and electricity grids, cannot easily be rebuilt.

'We are outside history now,' exclaims sculptor Muhammad Ghani, who studied in Rome and has regularly exhibited in galleries in Europe and Asia. 'We have always had contact with others – with Greece and India in the ancient past and in modern times with Europe, India and the US,' he explains. 'Now no-one knows about us and we don't know what is going on in the world.'

Since the 1991 Gulf War news of hardships suffered by Iraqis have focused on health, price rises and shortages. Up to a million people have perished from infectious diseases and malnutrition exacerbated by lack of medicines and other effects of sanctions – though some goods, including US videos and luxury foods, find their way into the country, legally and illegally.

The ban on the export of books and journals to Iraq is a little-known feature of the embargo. Iraqi educationalists and scientists accuse Western professionals who were once their colleagues and teachers of betrayal. They say foreign academics are colluding with the military policy of the US and Britain.

'I am not a military man, I am an artist. Why should they boycott me?' asks a confused teacher.

Iraqis say that foreign post offices limit mail to Iraq to 10 grammes. Anything heavier is not sent on. The effect is to cut off more than 6,000 university teachers, 8,000 doctors, as well as architects, journalists, historians, translators, biologists and musicians from their Western colleagues.

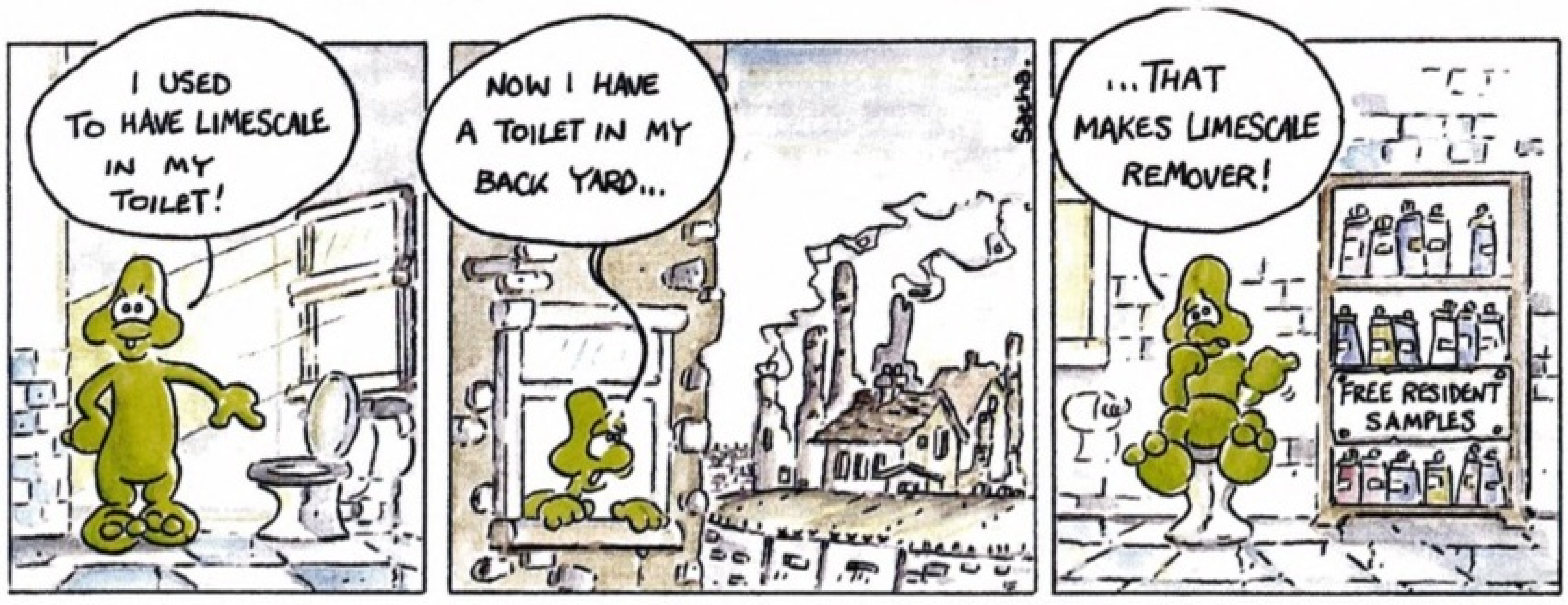
'This is unethical,' says surgeon Dr Ali, who trained at London's Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. 'My teachers would never allow the medicine I must practise because of inadequate supplies.'

The passivity of the international medical community shocks these doctors. Deputy Health Minister Dr Showki Marcus, who trained in Holland, describes the boycott of information as a violation of human rights. Another foreign-trained scholar bewildered by the cut-off is Dr Huda Ammash, Dean of Baghdad University Women's College and an environmental biologist. Ammash is researching the toxic effects of war radiation and is anxious to report her findings abroad. But, she notes, 'I cannot secure invitations to academic conferences to report or publish my research.'

Iraqi professionals are generally pro-Western in outlook and in the past some took risks to report human-rights abuses. They say they are the moderates who could strengthen international ties and help move Iraq towards democracy. They conclude that the tough UN sanctions are not aimed at their leader or his military ambitions but at the skills, intelligence and pride represented by this modern and moderate community. ■

Barbara Nimri Aziz, Gemini News Service

Chlorophyll by Sacha


I USED TO HAVE LIMESCALE IN MY TOILET!
NOW I HAVE A TOILET IN MY BACK YARD...
Sacha
...THAT MAKES LIMESCALE REMOVER!
FREE RESIDENT SAMPLES

Cheesed off

Eighteen people were hurt while taking part in an ancient ceremony on Cooper's Hill near Gloucester, England, in which people chase cheeses weighing more than four kilogrammes down the steep hillside. Cheese chasing is thought to have begun as a fertility rite in pre-Roman times.

The Economist, No. 7917

Legal euthanasia

Australia's first legislation to make voluntary euthanasia legal was passed by the Northern Territory Parliament on 2 June after an emotional 14-hour debate. Dubbed 'The Kill Bill' by opponents, the new law means that terminally ill people who meet certain guidelines can end their lives with medical assistance – including those travelling from other states in search of voluntary euthanasia. Euthanasia has become established in Holland and the US state of Oregon but this is the first time legislation has been passed to allow it. Many Aboriginal groups are opposed to the Bill, claiming it conflicts with traditional culture. Disability groups oppose it because they fear disabled people may opt for euthanasia to save relatives money and distress. 'It is a precedent,' said Jack Jones of the Auckland Voluntary Euthanasia Society, 'which will be followed sooner or later by every country. It is a sign of the times. Obviously there will now be considerable pressure on the New Zealand Parliament to do something about it.'

Disability Awareness in Action, No 28

Cosmic visas

Russian cosmonauts who landed in Florida on board the US space shuttle forgot their visas. US space agency NASA had to ask the State Department to rustle up some papers otherwise they would have violated America's golden rule that foreigners without visas are illegal aliens.

Independent, 27 June 1995

Bank blunder

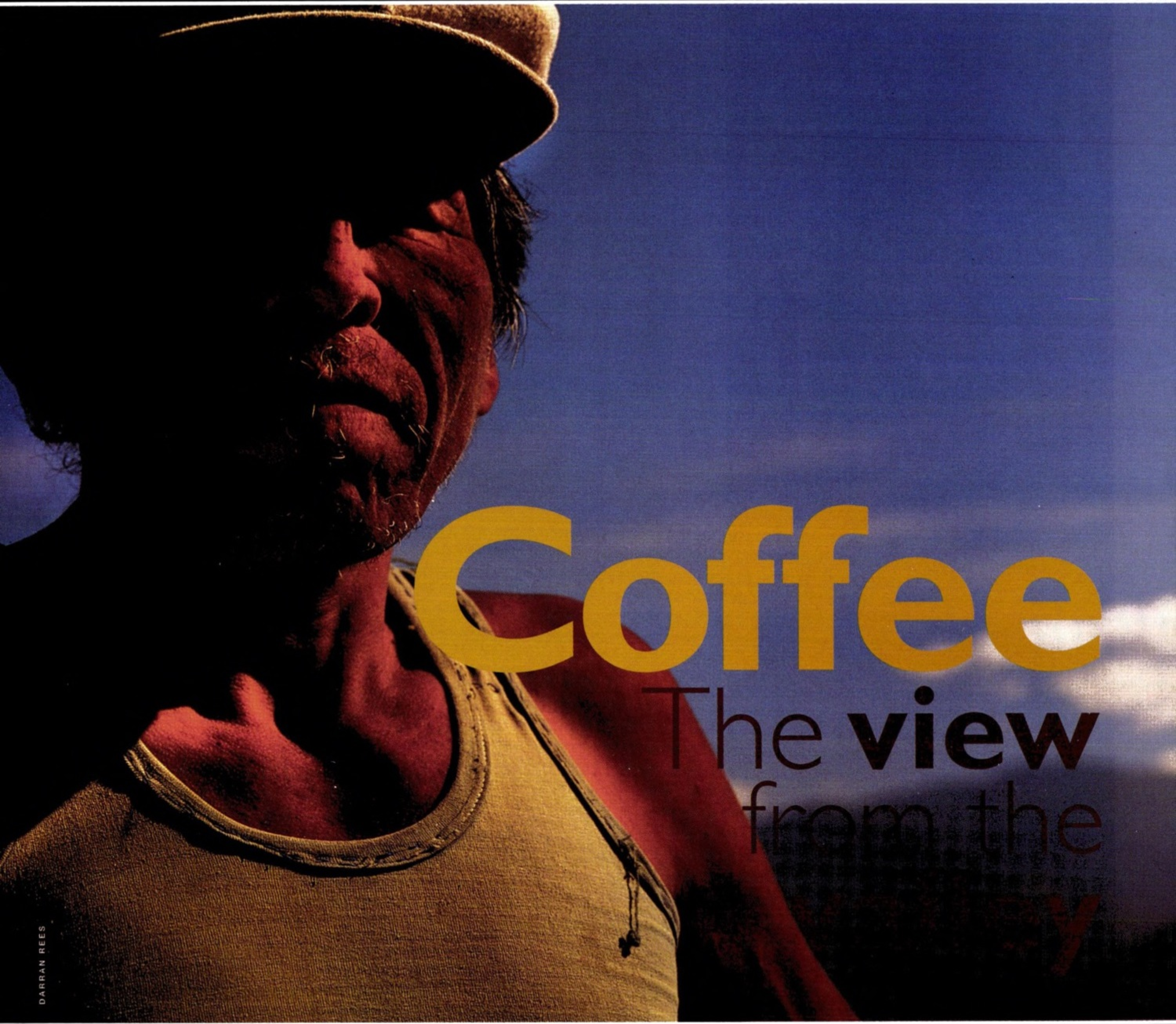
A confidential World Bank report admits that its resettlement plans for a dam in Indonesia were 'highly defective' and that 72 per cent of the families affected by the dam are now worse off than they were before. The reservoir of the Kedung Ombo Dam in central Java, which was completed in 1989 with a $165-million loan from the Bank, displaced 5,390 families (almost 30,000 people) from 20 villages.

Bankcheck, No 11

Quote

The law doth punish man or woman
That steals the goose from off the common
But lets the greater felon loose
That steals the common from the goose.

Anon 18th century English epigram



DARRAN REES

Coffee
The view from the [illegible]

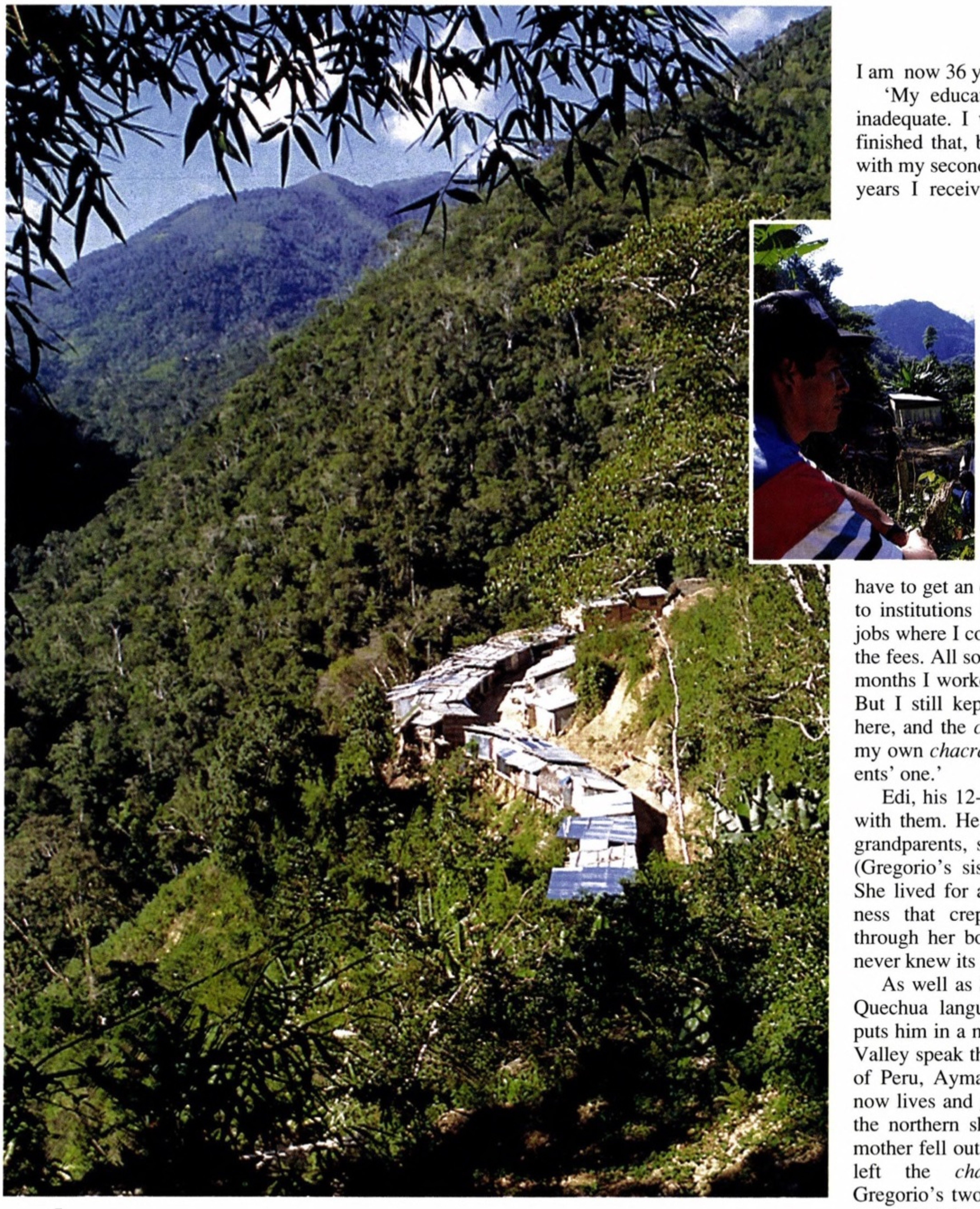
Coffee drinker **David Ransom** joins coffee farmer **Gregorio Gomez** on a long trek in pursuit of the explanation for a persistent injustice.

'WHAT has changed in my lifetime?' Abraham chuckles with genuine amusement at the idea.

Abraham is 73 years old. His son is now the mayor of San Juan del Oro, the town where he lives on the lower eastern slopes of the Peruvian Andes, not far from the Amazon Basin. Another son was killed in an accident on the perilous road up to the Altiplano, the high mountainous plateau that dominates Peru. During the past ten years Abraham has lived through the crossfire of a civil war between Sendero Luminoso ('Shining Path') revolutionaries and the Peruvian Army. Peace is only just returning. I am curious to know what he makes of it all.

'I tell you this,' he says, his face taking on the gaze you see in the picture of him on the cover of this magazine. 'The *cafeteleros*, the coffee farmers, were poor when we came here 40 years ago, and we are just as poor now. That has not changed at all.'

Forty years ago I was eight years old. British cities were still black with the



Beginning at the end: Punta de la Carretera (above); Gregorio (inset) looking out over the Tambopata Valley and down a shopping mall in Oxford (inset opposite page). Isaias Pajsi Chaiña near Daniel Limarche's shop on the mountain top (previous page).

soot of the industrial revolution, pockmarked with slums and bomb-sites. There were no supermarkets, few televisions, no computers and few washing machines – things I now think of as commonplace. Everything I take for granted has changed during my lifetime. I take change itself for granted.

Abraham does not. Nor does Gregorio Gomez, a gentle, watchful *cafetelero* whose home is quite close to Abraham's, a few kilometres higher up the magnificent Tambopata Valley in southern Peru. I am to spend a lot of time with Gregorio in the coming weeks.

'I was born in the Sierra, the mountains, near Sandia,' he says. 'When I was very young, less than a year old, my parents brought me here to the Tambopata Valley. They came here, according to what they tell me, because there was not much of a life to be had there in the Sierra, and there were a lot of people. Here in the valley, in those days, there were few people but plenty of land and things to produce, especially coffee. That would have been in about 1959. I am now 36 years old.

'My education was, I'm afraid, pretty inadequate. I went to primary school and finished that, but I was unable to continue with my secondary-school studies. For eight years I received no education at all and worked all the time on my parents' *chacra*, their farm. When a secondary college was established in San Juan del Oro, near my parents' *chacra*, I joined it. I spent three years there, still working on the *chacra*. Unfortunately the quality of the teaching was very poor, since the teachers were not professionals.

'So I took it upon myself to educate myself, what we call "auto-education". Many people here have to get an education in this way. I went to institutions in Juliaca and Puno, getting jobs where I could to earn my keep and pay the fees. All sorts of jobs, they were: for six months I worked as a clerk to a magistrate. But I still kept in touch with my parents here, and the *chacra*. In fact I built myself my own *chacra* slightly apart from my parents' one.'

Edi, his 12-year-old nephew, lives there with them. He's a bit of a handful for his grandparents, says Gregorio. Edi's mother (Gregorio's sister) died at the age of 20. She lived for a year in agony from an illness that crept untreated from her feet through her body until it killed her. They never knew its name.

As well as Spanish Gregorio speaks the Quechua language of the Altiplano. This puts him in a minority – most people in the Valley speak the other indigenous language of Peru, Aymara. He has a daughter who now lives and goes to school in Juliaca, on the northern shores of Lake Titicaca. Her mother fell out with Gregorio's parents and left the *chacra* several years ago. Gregorio's two living sisters have returned to the Altiplano. So he is the only one who remains to care for his parents, Luis and Celestina, in their old age.

He is a member of the small San Isidro coffee-producers' co-operative that is based in a one-street village called Yanahuaya. This year he is also the elected vice-president of CECOVASA, the central union of nine co-operatives in the region which coordinates the marketing of almost all its coffee production. It was in this capacity, as a representative of some 5,000 *cafeteleros* and at the invitation of the NI, that he came to Britain to see what eventually happens to the coffee he produces in Peru.

And this is the story of the magazine. It is about how Gregorio and I followed the coffee bean along its incredible

PHOTOS THROUGHOUT BY DAVID RANSOM UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED.

journey from the farmers of Peru to the drinkers of Britain.

In Britain

Gregorio had never been out of Peru before. I said to him, as we drove along the winding lanes of rural Britain, that he should let me know if he wanted to stop and take photographs. One day we were in the Cotswolds, an area popular with tourists but not noted for the giant forests, deserts and snow-capped peaks that are familiar to Gregorio. We did, it is true, glimpse some captive llamas through a hedge in a nearby 'wildlife park'. But I expected him to want snaps of an idyllic, rural, English scene.

Eventually he asked me to stop. It was a dull, sunken spot in a field beneath a giant electricity pylon. He stood in front of the pylon and asked me to take a photograph of him on his own camera.

'What, here, Gregorio? With the pylon?' I asked.

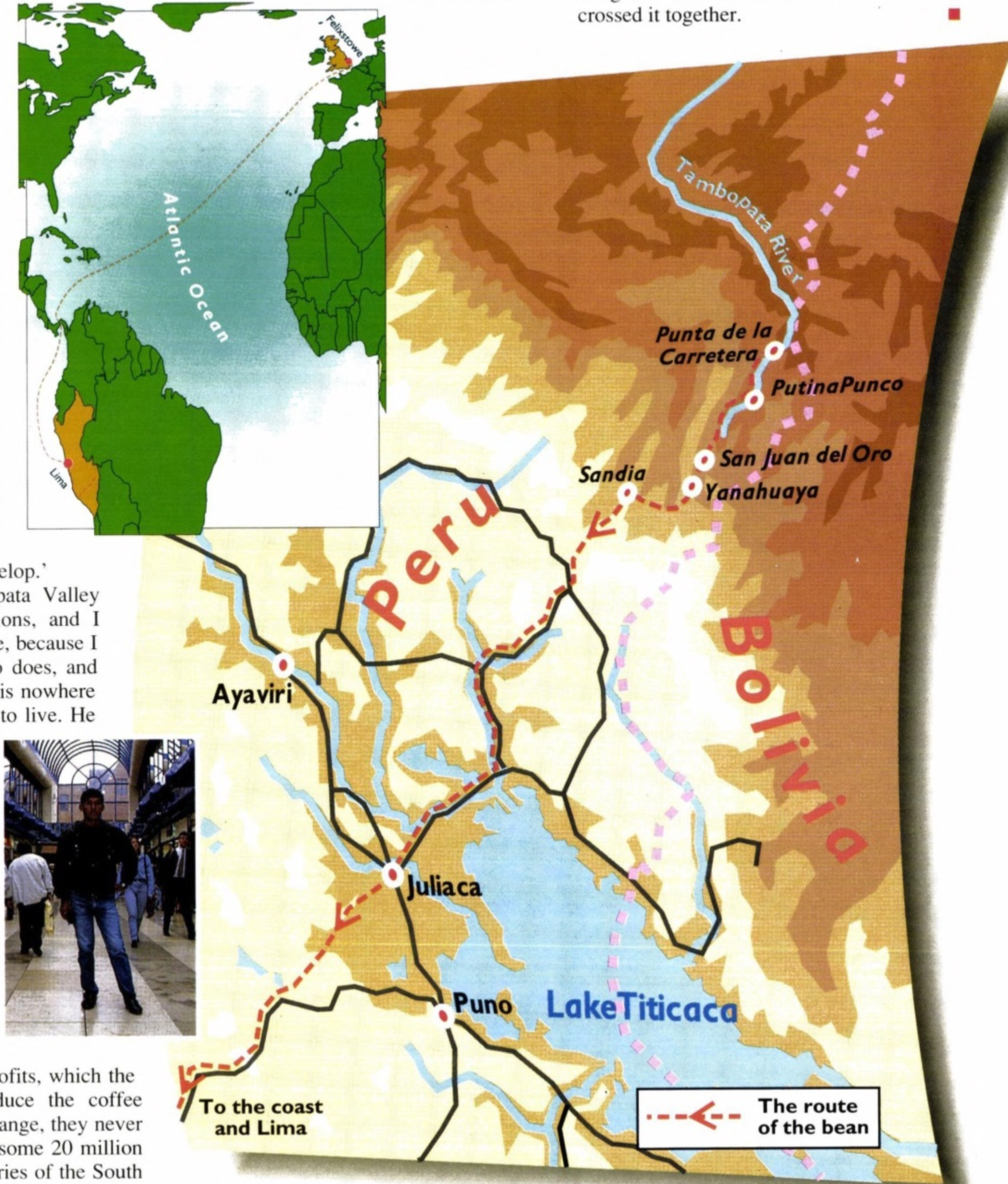
'That's right,' he said. 'This photograph will show the people at home what it will be like when we, too, have electricity and can develop.'

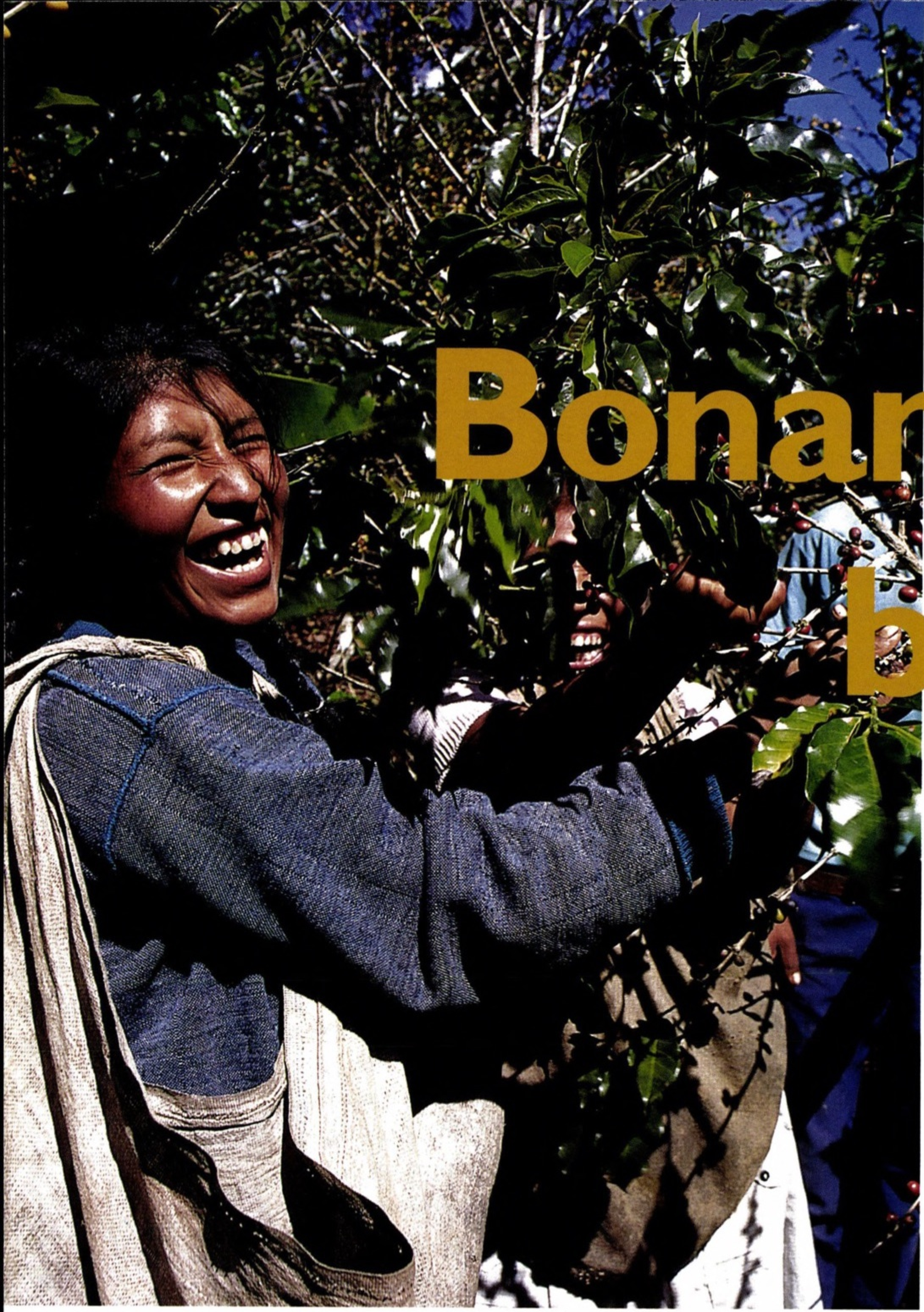
I imagined the Tambopata Valley strung with electricity pylons, and I grieved – I would, of course, because I do not live there. Gregorio does, and he loves the Valley. There is nowhere else he can or would wish to live. He farms coffee because there is no other living he can earn. But as a coffee farmer he is not engaged in a romantic, 'traditional' rural activity. He is at one end of a massive, modern, international industry dedicated to satisfying the latest consuming passions of affluent, electrified, urban culture in the North.

That industry generates multi-million-dollar profits, which the people who actually produce the coffee never see. Unless things change, they never will. Although they – like some 20 million others in the tropical countries of the South – work all their lives for coffee, coffee has never worked for them. The power, the profits and the benefits all flow the other way. If the pylons ever appear, bringing with them light, healthcare and modern communications, they will be a potent symbol of change at last.

So we went in search of an explanation, any kind of justification, for a very simple and persistent injustice. At the price we pay for a cup of coffee in a smart café in London or Toronto or New York or Sydney or Wellington or Johannesburg, the sacks of wonderful coffee from the Tambopata Valley are worth something like $13,000 each. Yet, if they are lucky, the *cafeteleros* of Peru will receive just $70 for one of them.

While this injustice persists then so will the dreadful and quite unnecessary suffering it causes. I say 'unnecessary' suffering because, as Gregorio and I are to discover, the gulf of mutual ignorance that divides farmers from drinkers is now being bridged by a relatively young but vibrant and growing fair-trade movement that is changing the rules of the game. There is a way forward, across the bridge they have built. Gregorio and I know this because we crossed it together. ■


Felixstowe
Atlantic Ocean
Lima
Tambopata River
Punta de la Carretera
PutinaPunco
San Juan del Oro
Sandia
Yanahuaya
Peru
Bolivia
Ayaviri
Juliaca
Puno
Lake Titicaca
To the coast and Lima
The route of the bean
5000m
4000m
3000m
2000m
1000m
500m
Altiplano
High Andes
Tambopata Valley
Coffee grows between 200 and 800m



Bonanza or bust

Hard labour on the farm brings uncertain returns from growing, picking and processing the bean...

'Welcome to my *chacra*!' exclaims Pamela. She takes us by the hand and leads us inside her house to a table decked with mandarins, papaya, jugs of juices, flowers, fresh herbs, simmering cups of cocoa. The one thing that's missing is coffee – if they drink it at all, the coffee farmers use it for relaxation in the afternoons.

'This is *my* home,' continues Pamela. 'Look how wonderful it is! Look what we have done! Look what we have made here! Isn't it beautiful? Don't you think so? Sit down! Sit down everyone! Eat! Have breakfast! Have lunch! Eat what we have made! Welcome! Welcome!'

She bustles distractedly between us while her infant son stomps about in a woollen jump-suit with a large teddy bear emblazoned on the front, and blows raspberries at us. I, for one, am exhausted, drenched with sweat. To reach this place we have climbed steeply on foot for two hours. Only the mule that came with us still seems to be in reasonable shape.

'*Buenas tardes,* good afternoon,' says Pablo, Pamela's husband, introducing himself to my tape recorder. His darting eyes, mobile mouth and high-pitched croak make him seem slightly roguish. But his laugh, like everyone's here, comes straight from the soul.

'This is Pablo Cahuana Flores speaking. Member of the San Ignacio Co-operative. In the valley of the Tambopata River. Sandia. Department of Puno. Peru,' he shouts, as if reporting for duty. 'It is Friday.'

He trembles faintly and is at a loss for words, transfixed by the machine. More to the point, no outsiders – and certainly no *gringos* like me – have ever visited him on his *chacra* before, let alone asked him to describe what he does. Where to start?

Well, while Pablo collects his thoughts let me slip in a very brief bit of history for you. Without it you cannot understand why Pamela and Pablo feel as passionately as they do about their home.

Forty years ago Aymara- and Quechua-speaking peoples of the Peruvian Altiplano, who had lived for centuries around the desolate northern fringes of Lake Titicaca, were in urgent need of land. They began to make trouble, to form themselves into peasant unions. They were met with promises of reform from the Government. To relieve the pressure the Government built a road down into the forest that blankets the fragile, precipitous folds of the Andean escarpment to the east.

This was virgin territory, 'uninhabited' save for a few spectral 'tribes' retreating ever deeper into the forest as the road advanced. Here there was space, fertile soil and an escape from the relentless cold of the Altiplano. The prospect of a better life was pursued by landless people believing that a good living might eventually be made from growing coffee.

But the bounty of this majestic forest is not easily won, and it is won hardest of all by destitute 'colonists' such as these with nothing but their own labour to muster. From the road durable paths had to be fashioned up the sheer sides of the mountains. The sites for settlement had to be carefully selected. The cold at levels higher than 800 metres, the heat and humidity at levels lower than 200 metres above sea level would kill the coffee plant.

The forest itself, towers of timber pinned to the slopes like candles to a Christmas tree, had to be thinned, while still preserving the shade needed by the coffee bushes, over an area of perhaps three hectares for each *chacra*. A platform had to be levelled to provide a drying area for the coffee, the loose soil soaked and compacted to form adobe walls for the two stories of the farmhouse; a building wide enough for a bed at each end, a table and bench in between, and not much else. A source of pure water had to be found. Finally, after the planting – first of essential vegetables and fruit for survival, then of the coffee itself – came the long, long wait: three years at least, tending the growing coffee plants 'like children' until the first fruits appeared. The hardships, the back-breaking labour without reward of these early years are still vivid in the memory of this place. They have never really gone away.

Action being easier than words, Pablo offers to show me their coffee plants – Pamela having already gone on ahead. He sets off at speed up the mountainside behind his *chacra*.

'There they are,' he says, pointing to a clearing of felled trunks and solitary papaya trees. A wooden aqueduct, perched on stilts, carries a trickle of water purposefully across the clearing into the forest beyond. Then I see, nestling between two trunks, a bed of bright green coffee seedlings. 'They will serve me for 15 years.'

'Only 15?' I ask. The standard productive life of a coffee bush is 30 to 40 years.

'That's right. Lower down they last a little longer. But they produce less coffee. Over there, those plants are two years old. Up there, three. When the flowers come out in September it is as if the mountains were covered in snow, just like the Altiplano. Very beautiful.'

The hardships, the back-breaking labour without reward of these early years are still vivid in the memory of this place. They have never really gone away.

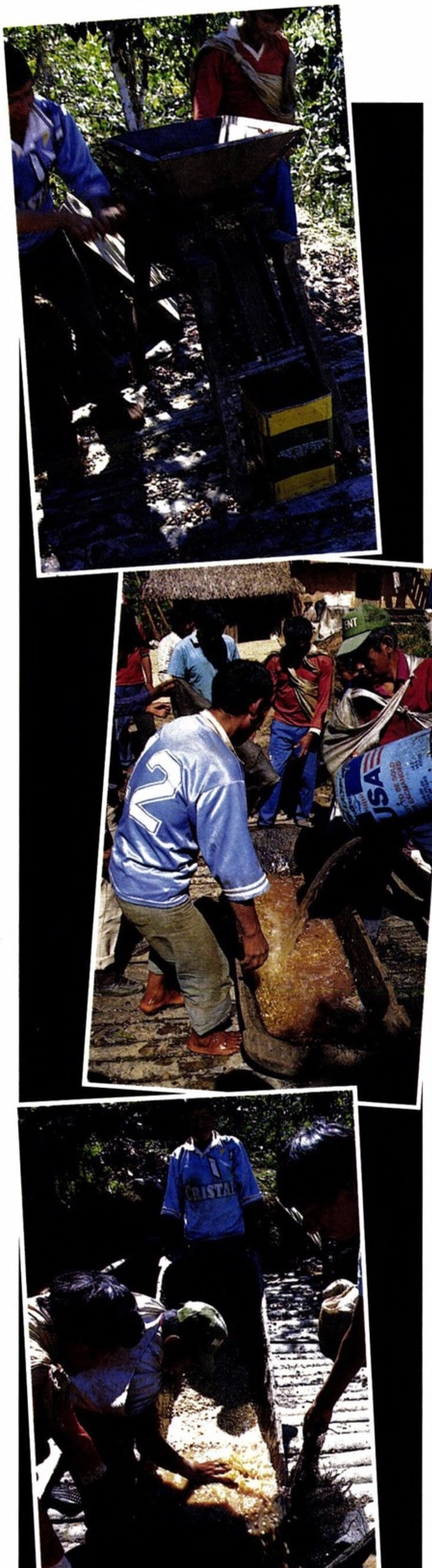
We enter a grove of mature coffee bushes. They are planted about two metres apart. Dappled-grey, skeletal stems, several of them to a bush, fan outwards from firm ground, which is clear and smooth save for a litter of leaves. The 'cherries' growing amid dark, glossy leaves turn from green to yellow and finally to red as they mature. They do, indeed, resemble small and unappetizing cherries. Interspersed among the coffee bushes are mandarin orange trees, brilliant with fruit.

Ahead we hear voices and there is Pamela again, beckoning frantically. She has draped a shawl across her shoulders to form a pouch under her arm. Half-a-dozen people, the men wearing numbered soccer shirts of the latest design, emerge from the bushes.

These are *peones*, labourers. They come down from the Altiplano for about five months during harvest time. They live in a shed beside the farmhouse. Every *chacra* employs *peones*. Around the valley, at intervals through the forest, precious level ground has been cleared for them to play soccer on Sundays. They call Pamela and Pablo *dueños*, owners. There is, however, little to distinguish between them.

The pace of events begins to quicken. Coffee cherries fly in all directions. Mandarin oranges are plucked from the trees – a sack of 100 sells for less than one US dollar on local markets. There are bouts of hilarity as Pamela and her band of

Zestful picking by a *peon* leaves Pamela in the shade (opposite).
Pamela, Pablo and offspring with the raised drying platform for fair trade in front of them (below).



The process (from top to bottom): *peones* pulping, washing and draining the bean under Pablo's watchful eye.

peones give an exuberant exhibition of their daily drudgery.

Pablo is keen nonetheless to impress upon me the seriousness of this task. 'We also produce coffee here for the *comercio alternativo*, for fair trade. We are careful to select only the best cherries for them, the ones that are perfectly ripe. It is a risk for us. There is only one day when they are perfect. If it rains on that day then they fall from the bushes and are lost. But it is a risk we are happy to take to produce the best quality coffee.'

The pouches are filled and we descend the slope again towards the *chacra*. To one side the wooden aqueduct pours crystal-clear water into a concrete tank. A vessel resembling a fat dugout canoe is filled with water. The cherries are unloaded into it and float on the surface. They will sink slowly to the bottom as they ferment. Again, Pablo stresses to me the importance of getting this process exactly right.

Beside this vessel is another similar one, filled previously, from which the cherries are now removed and spread out to dry for a few hours. These cherries, by now reeking of fermenting fruit, are passed through a crude but effective depulper. Pour the cherries into a hob at the top, rotate the handle and hey presto! the soft fruit pulp falls out to one side while the seeds – the hard coffee beans – clatter down a tin chute to the other. The pulp is returned to the soil as compost. The beans still have a thick and resistant mucus coating. They are passed through more fresh water at least five or six times and literally scrubbed by foot or by hand. It is an extremely laborious process.

The result – beans shining like polished peanuts – is called *café lavado*, washed coffee. These beans are spread out to dry beneath the sun for two or three days. Beans for the 'normal' market are placed on black synthetic material stretched directly over the ground. The *comercio alternativo* beans are spread over raised wooden platforms so that air can pass beneath them, making the drying process more effective. If rain threatens – and every night – the beans must be collected, brought in and kept dry.

After all this, a husk or 'parchment' still remains on the beans. Pamela and Pablo test them as the drying proceeds by rubbing them between their hands to remove the husk and inspect the colour and texture of the bean inside, until there is no sign of moisture and it has taken on a particular shade of grey-green. In this condition, still covered with the husk and known as *café pergamino*, 'parchment coffee', the beans can be preserved for long periods without deteriorating – a quality that allows coffee to be produced as a cash crop even in such isolated spots as this.

We convene in a small circle to consider the implications of what we have seen. Gregorio conducts the interviews. We have been joined by Octavio Morales, a thin, solemn neighbour immaculately dressed and wearing a flat cloth cap.

'*Señor periodista inglés*,' he begins slowly in a deep, resonant and mournful voice. 'We send greetings to your compatriots so far away and ask them to keep drinking their coffee. We want to thank you for coming to visit us here, the first journalist we have ever seen. Now you know for yourself how we must live, what a labour it is to produce coffee. But on the New York Coffee Exchange this morning the price has fallen to just 143 US cents per pound.' *This morning?* How can he possibly know *that*?

'Yes,' continues Pablo, before I have the chance to ask. 'The price does not adequately reflect the work we put in, the costs we have to pay to maintain our families, employ *peones* and everything else. We produce coffee here of the highest quality, without using chemical fertilizers, herbicides or fungicides. Our coffee is completely *organic* and should receive a better price. That is all I, Pablo Cahuana Flores, have to say at the moment. Thank you.'

Well, let's make a few simple calculations. Let's assume that this year Pamela and Pablo will receive the equivalent of about $70 dollars, after the deduction of road transport and processing costs, for each 50-kilo sack of *café pergamino* they are eventually able to sell – a pretty good price. If their *chacra* totals about three hectares and two hectares actually produce coffee, and at a good average (for here) of 20 sacks per hectare, then they should be able sell a total of 40 sacks and receive an income of $2,800.

But they still have to pay the wages and keep of the *peones* and the cost of transport by mule to the nearest coffee store. More to the point, three years ago they sometimes received less than $20 per sack. Such prices were typical of the years between 1989 and 1993, when their income did not even cover the costs of production. Last year, after frost killed part of the coffee crop in Brazil, Pamela and Pablo had a bonanza. A sack might sell for as much as $200.

Partly as a consequence of this bonanza our leaving ceremony becomes extremely protracted – suddenly everyone is equipped with compact cameras. We line up by the *chacra*, by the drying coffee beans, the pulping machines, the coffee bushes and the papaya trees; we embrace different combinations of *peones, dueños*, families, friends, enemies, children and lovers. Strange that I should feel at all uneasy at having left my own image, my own 'soul', behind in this place, as well as taking theirs with me. ■

Beauty and the bean

Facing up to ecological problems in paradise...

WE set off into the forest. We have been going just 15 minutes when we stop at a promontory overlooking the vertiginous valley of the Tambopata River. Here Daniel Limarche keeps a shop. Inside is a cornucopia for sale: tinned fish, rice, Coca Cola and a dozen bottles of real champagne – more trophies, no doubt, from last year's bonanza. This must be one of the highest shops in the world (see photo on page 19).

From here, the path descends in zigzags across the slopes of the valley. Giant trees fold over us; streams tumble with pure water; through dark, shaded air the forest animals call their warnings – a sudden sound like a large drop of water falling into a still pond, or a slowly descending, derisive jeer. Out over the valley the vulture of the Andean foothills glides patiently by.

Since we are humans, treading paths where the stones have been worn smooth by the passage of human feet, we are never quite in paradise. We cross sections where the original path has been entirely swept away, the forest replaced by tangled roots, ugly naked earth baking dry and dusty in the sunlight – giant landslides. Some of them are still moving as we cross.

It is tempting to push the ecological alarm button. We are at the headwaters of the Amazon river, an extremely sensitive environment. Four years ago I was in the Brazilian rainforest just to the north, and concern there had already been mounting for some time at the increased rate at which silt was being carried down into the Amazon Basin from the Peruvian escarpment, with unpredictable and possibly catastrophic environmental consequences throughout the region.

Blaming the coffee colonists for this looks, at first sight, like a fairly straightforward matter. They are, after all, thinning the forest, weakening the delicate structures that hold a fragile layer of fertile soil to the precipitous slopes. Coffee is, like cash crops generally, a voracious consumer of the limited nutrients in the soil. All it takes is heavy rain, of which there is plenty, and the soil erodes.

But the matter is *not* as simple as this. The whole of this region is, in geological terms, a very young environment, still in the process of formation. The soil of the Amazon rainforest itself derives largely from the silt eroded from these mountains; at least some erosion must take place here to replenish soil washed away by the natural action of the river system. Look to the summits, where no human has ever ventured, and you can see light-green, healing scars made by earlier landslides caused quite naturally by the action of rain or earth tremors.

What is not in doubt is that the colonists are accelerating the natural process. They know this well enough. They lose some of the fertile soil on which they rely for their very lives with every rainfall. Already, higher up the valley, they will tell you that temperatures have begun to fall as the forest thins – just as they have fallen in Brazil, and for a similar cause, which is one reason why the Brazilian coffee crop is affected by frost.

No less in doubt, however, is that it does not have to be this way. For the coffee colonists here operate, as they have always done, without any support or technical assistance of any kind. You do not have to be an expert to conclude that the most minimal precautions, such as terracing or a more informed approach to the thinning of the tree-cover, could have a disproportionately beneficial effect. The problem is that people already on the brink of survival know this is not within their means. There is no point whatever in advocating such things unless the resources are there to achieve them. Forty years of working for the conventional coffee trade has not produced these resources: no-one believes that it ever will. Could the alternative trade make a difference? There is a silent hope that it might.

> ***Temperatures have begun to fall as the forest thins – just as they have fallen in Brazil.***

With disconcerting abruptness we emerge from the dimness of the forest path into brilliant light reflected from the surface of a rough, dirt road. Mules are tethered munching *pasto*, their standard green fodder. On the outer lip of the road there is an arc of tin-roofed, wooden huts perched over a precipice. A line of people sit in the shade on wooden benches watching the world, the coffee, an ancient bus, a small truck sprouting people like a vase, drift by.

They call this place Punta de la Carretera, 'end of the road'. But this is just the beginning of the long, long voyage our coffee has yet to make to meet its market. ■

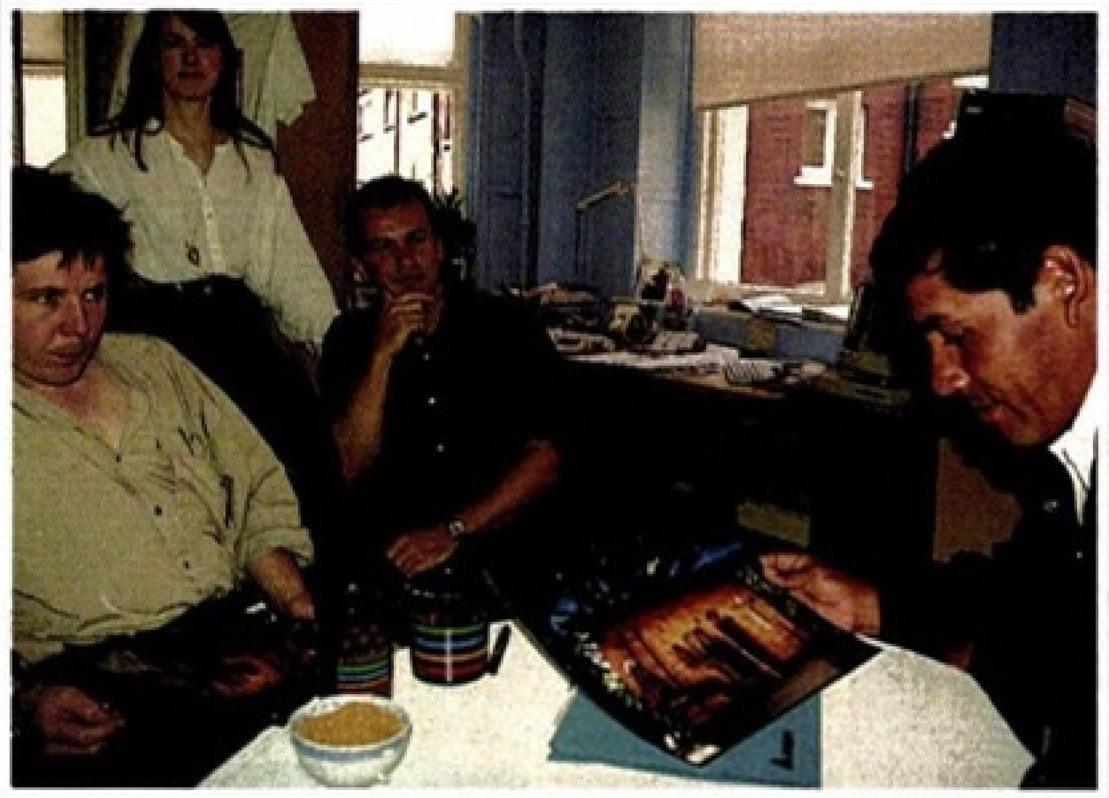
Natural erosion: Pablo drives a mule that carries no coffee but Darran's gear and a Coke bottle.

Luis and Celestina

Gregorio's parents stand erect and proud in front of the house the family built. Luis is 81 years old and Celestina is 64. In the valley behind them, far below, runs the Tambopata River.

We arrived here unannounced and found Luis and Celestina at work, washing coffee beans. They were wearing their working clothes.

Darran Rees had not planned to take a picture, but on seeing this scene he asked if he could do so. They agreed. Gregorio and I sat watching. We munched delicious pink bananas from the palm tree behind the house and played with the monkey. Unknown to Darran it crept into the frame at the feet of Luis just as the shot was taken.



When Darran showed a print of the photograph to Gregorio in London he was upset. He felt it was disrespectful of his parents. They had not had time to change out of their working clothes. And he feared his colleagues in the co-operative might think ill of him if his family were given too much prominence in the magazine.

I said to him that if he did not wish us to use it we would not. But he could see we were disappointed.

'Is it necessary, David?' he asked.

Until this moment I had seen the image as striking and beautiful. I had not even considered whether it was 'necessary'.

'When you look at this picture, Gregorio,' I said eventually, 'is it your parents as you know them that you see?'

'Yes, it is.'

'Then I think we should use it. It is truthful.'

'Very well. But those who see it must understand.'

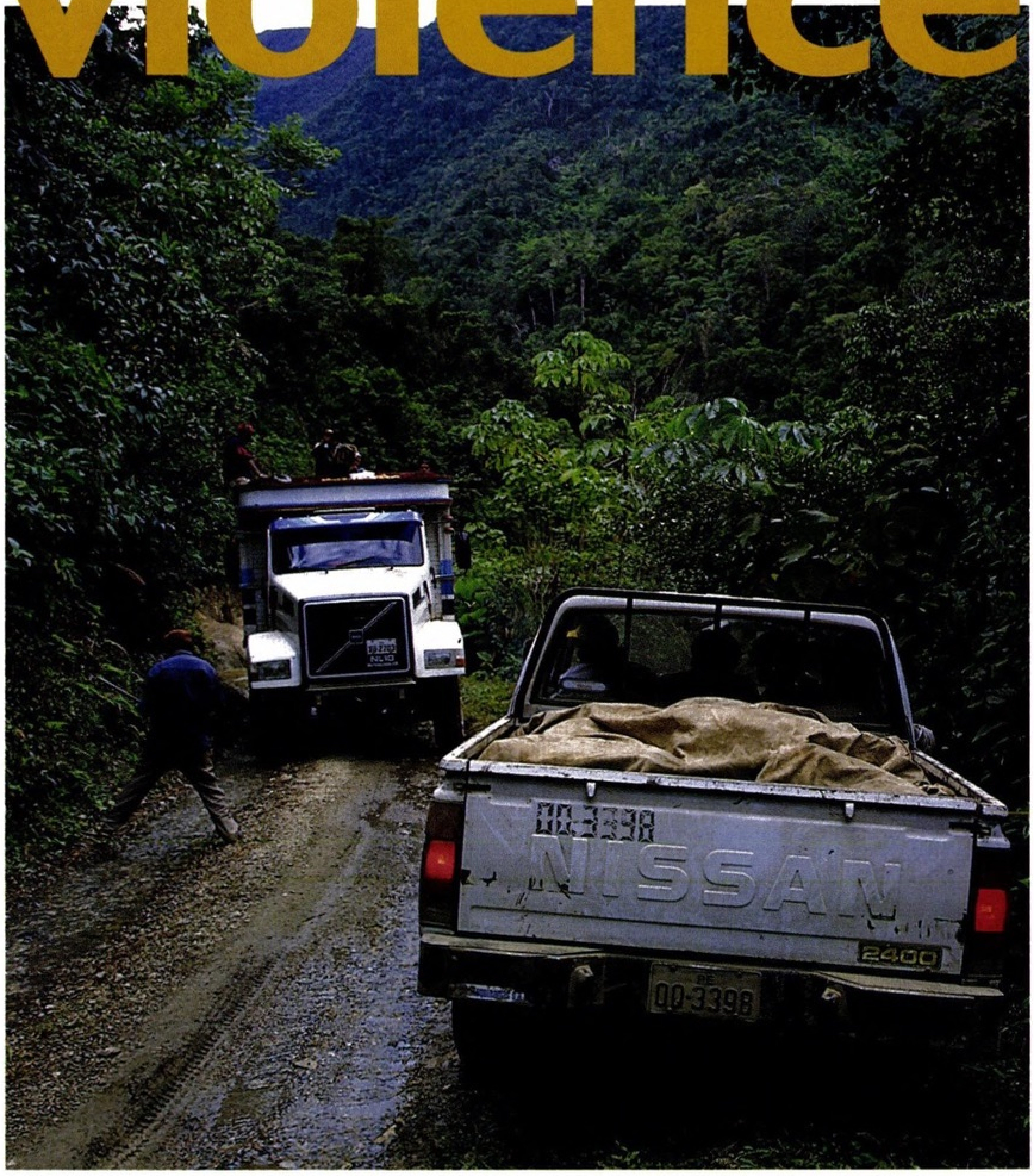
So I promised to explain what had happened. Had he not been with me in London I would not have thought of this at all.

Darran gave him the magnificent print as a gift and I imagine it now hangs on the wall of his house. ■

DARRAN REES

A kind of violence

Into the depths of isolation and out over the high Andes...



An hour or so along the road from Punta de la Carretera is a rare sight – a large area of gently sloping ground and an expanse of tin roofs shining in the sun. This is Putina Punco, the first settlement of any real size and the centre for the coffee farmers of the Tambopata Valley. From here we visit *chacras* belonging to all four co-operatives based in the town: two big ones, San Jorge and Charuyo, with more than a thousand members each; two small ones, San Ignacio and Union Azata.

Near the river is a concrete square surrounded by warehouses. The co-op members bring their sacks here by mule or on their backs – sometimes walking for as long as two days – to be weighed, tested for quality, registered, stored and dispatched in large Volvo trucks. From an office to one side comes the sound of a short-wave radio powered by a solar cell linked to a car battery. The *cafeteleros* can talk directly to Lima and learn the price of coffee that very moment on the New York Coffee Exchange – down again to 140 US cents per pound. This, of course, is where Octavio Morales got his information that morning, before we met him on Pablo's *chacra*.

One small co-op, the Union Azata, has lost a large chunk of its membership, which once stood at 800 and is now no more than 120. C*hacras* have been abandoned, the investment lost, during the lean years between 1989 and 1993. Gregorio tells me that Putina Punco was then a ghost town, losing 70 per cent of its population. For the past two years they have been slowly returning.

'Tell your readers, David, so far away on other continents,' says Hugo, a young and very bright official of Union Azata, 'that thousands of people here in this valley depend on the coffee they buy. You have seen how things are; how hard, how very hard we try to produce coffee of good quality for them. Tell them that we receive *minimal* payment for all our efforts. And tell all those ecologists, those very distinguished professionals, tell them to come and visit us here. Tell them that our forests are being extinguished and that we urgently, *urgently* need their help.'

'What we faced before the co-ops were founded,' adds Gregorio, 'was having to sell all our coffee to a few powerful *comerciantes*, intermediaries. They committed a kind of violence against us. They treated coffee just like anything else, with ruthless self-interest and indifference to its quality, and the price they paid was very low.

'That didn't suit us. It didn't suit us at all. It was a very difficult struggle and we had to make many sacrifices, building our own warehouses, our own communications, transport and so on. However low the price of coffee may fall we shall maintain our Co-op to the last, after all the sacrifices we made to set it up.'

I find the sheer isolation of this place intimidating. Sometimes I lie awake at night and it plays on my mind. There is no electricity, no medicine, not a single doctor. If your children become sick they either get better by themselves or they die – it is as simple as that. Yellow Fever stalks the houses.

So it is with some initial relief that I set off along the road out of Putina Punco taken by the coffee trucks. Abdon 'Maestro' Martínez is the *chofer*, the driver of the Nissan 4x4 (well, 4x3 in practice, because one of the drives is broken) pickup in which we travel. Abdon is called 'Maestro' because driving this road is more an art than a skill. When it rains the road can become impassable for weeks. In places it would look daunting to a mule.

It winds its way along the valley, climbing all the while. We stop off at San Juan del Oro, a slightly larger and older version of Putina Punco, with a gold mine in the hills where Gregorio has sometimes worked when times are bad with coffee. We fill the pickup with petrol siphoned from barrels piled high in a store.

Further along the road we call in at the San Isidro co-op in Yanahuaya, then leave Gregorio at his parents' *chacra*, where he has work to do on the coffee harvest.

And so, eventually, we set off for the heights of the Altiplano. Slowly, as we climb, the forest gives way to scrub. The higher we climb the more the mountains seem to loom over us, the more precipitous becomes the fall to the river far below. It's wise not to look over the edge.

The sun dips behind the mountains. The cold becomes intense, penetrating, as the darkness deepens. With the altitude my breathing begins to labour, my head to ache, the pain amplified by violent blows against the side and roof of the lurching vehicle, which I am helpless to prevent. We can see nothing except the dusty track ahead, illuminated in the headlamps. It is like being suffocated, frozen and beaten up inside one of those fibre-optic cameras surgeons use to explore our internal organs. I envy the inanimate coffee bean that comes this way too.

The Maestro stops at what at first appears to be a bright doorway in space. Slowly, as my eyes adjust to the radiant starlight, I see a line of dark buildings and, behind them, snow peaks near enough to touch. It is the summit. We have climbed from 800 to 5,000 metres (more than 16,000 feet) above sea level. It has taken us ten hours.

The journey is still far from over, though we climb no more. I recall dreaming fitfully in the freezing, turbulent darkness. I recall a reflection of stars dancing on the surface of Lake Titicaca. And I recall a bright strip of orange light in the distance – Juliaca, our destination and the end of the stars. After a day and a night on the road, dawn is not far away.

Juliaca is built from the flat earth on which it stands and it is not always easy to tell whether the buildings are rising up or falling down. The streets are jammed with rickshaws and markets. The town has two great attractions for the coffee producers: electricity and banks. The electricity is needed to drive a processing plant; the banks for the export business.

So it is here that the Central Office of Agrarian Coffee-producing Co-operatives of the Valleys of Sandia (CECOVASA) has its base. The coffee trucks from Putina Punco arrive in the yard and unload their cargo into a warehouse. At the end of the warehouse is a line of green machines from Brazil and Colombia. The first shakes out the crudest impurities in the *café pergamino*: stones, wood and other relics of the valleys. From here the bean passes into a cylindrical mill which removes its husk. Finally we are left with the naked bean; a small, grey-green, unprepossessing lozenge in two fused segments known as 'green' coffee.

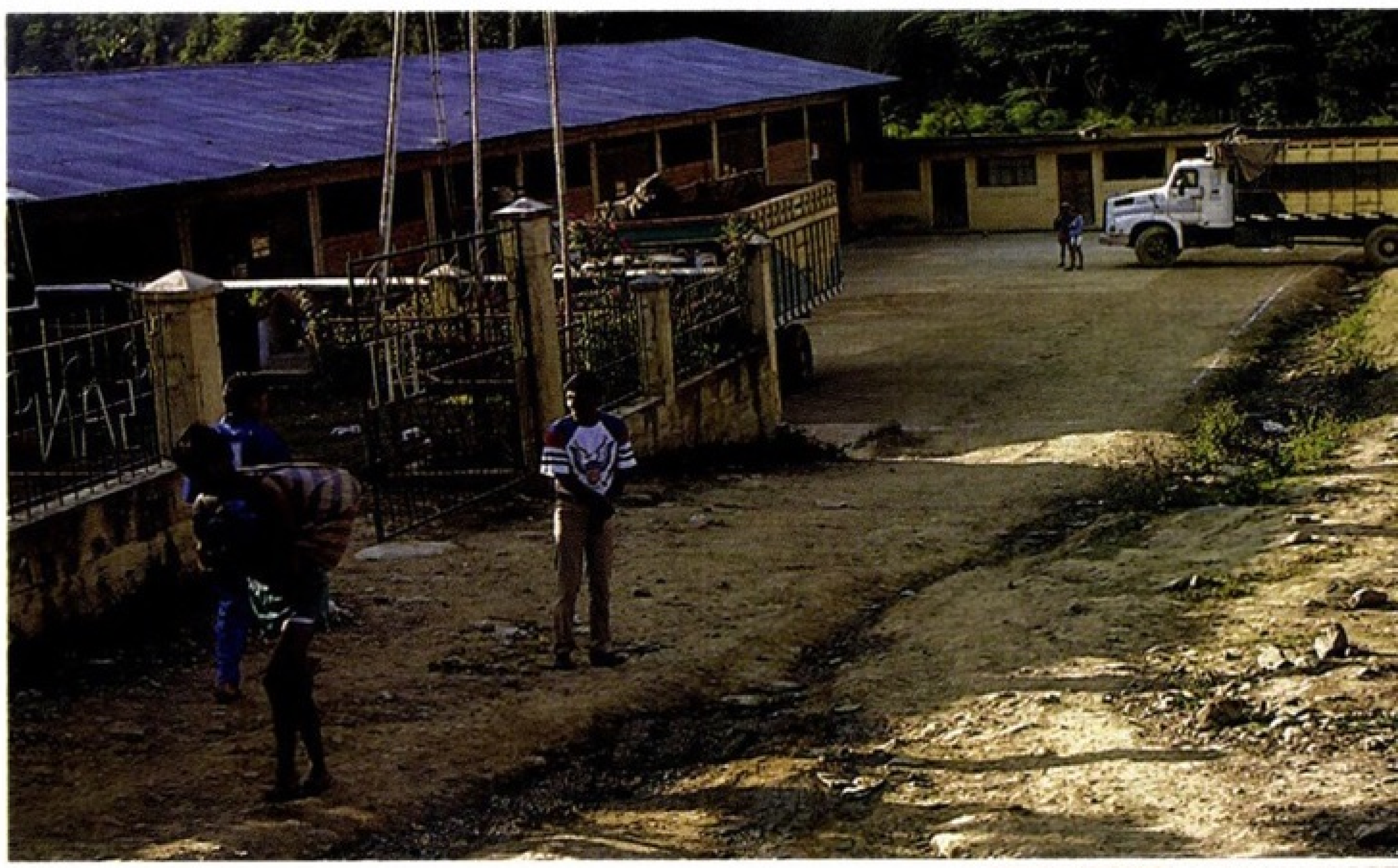
A stack of four more sieves, shaking violently, grades the green coffee beans by size. Only the largest are considered suitable for export – as in most coffee-exporting countries, inferior beans are sold for domestic consumption. Something like 20 per cent of the beans fail to pass muster for export. Finally they run the gauntlet of a conveyor belt set between a line of hired workers who pick out bad beans by hand.

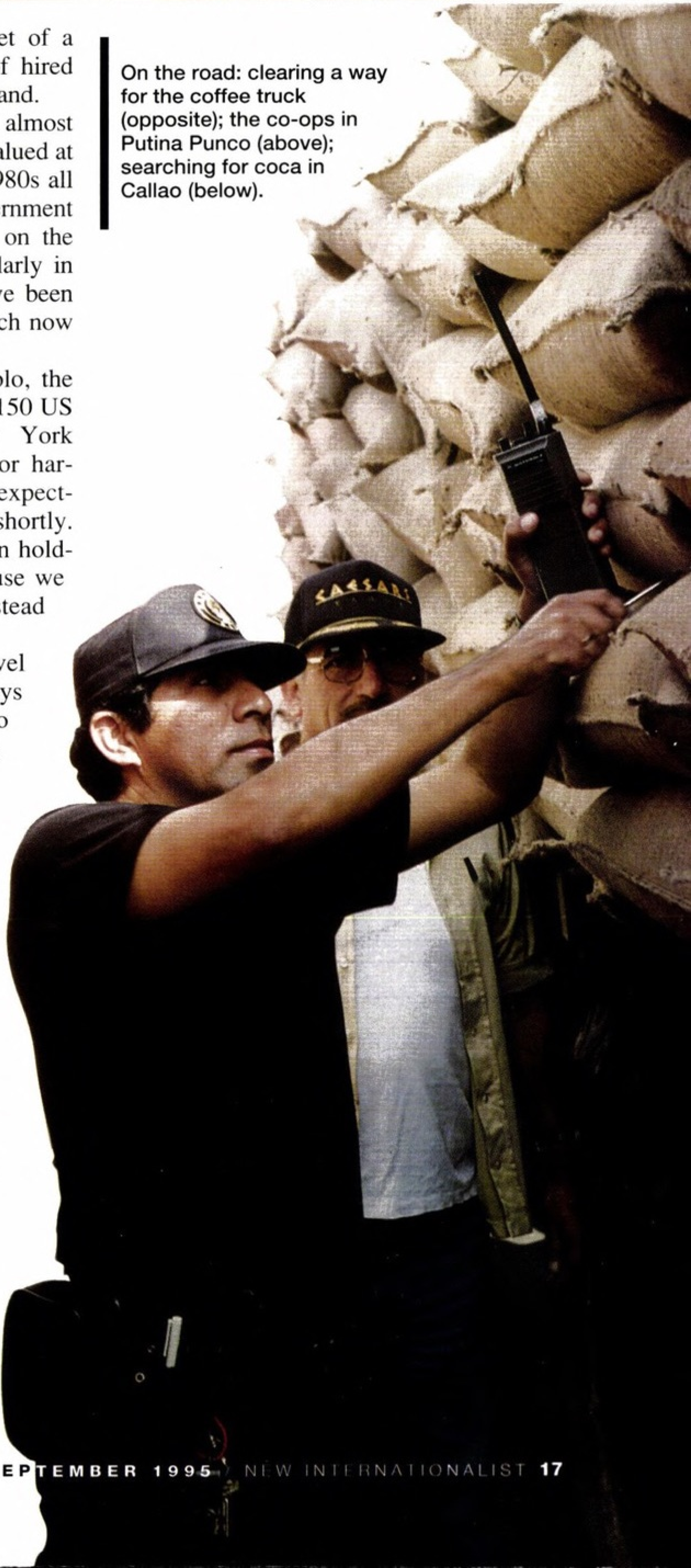
Last year CECOVASA exported almost 22,000 sacks of green coffee in all, valued at some $3.5 million. Until the early 1980s all coffee exports went through Government agencies, which traditionally relied on the US market. Since then, and particularly in the last few years, new markets have been developed in Japan and Europe, which now buy 80 per cent of their coffee.

'We have good news,' says Pablo, the manager. 'The price is rising. Over 150 US cents per pound on the New York Exchange today. Rumours of a poor harvest in Brazil. An announcement is expected from the Brazilian Government shortly. This is a relief for us. We have been holding on, waiting to make sales because we thought the price would rise. But instead it fell.'

The green coffee now has to travel in rented 20-ton trucks for two days across a mountainous desert down to the coast, then north to Callao, Lima's seaport. Shortage of time, luckily, means that I fly by plane from Juliaca.

In Callao an official in a sharp black uniform, searching for illegal coca, plunges a stiletto blade into some of the sacks as they arrive. A gang of labourers lines a container with brown paper and fills it with 250 sacks to make up the standard 'lot'. The doors are sealed. The beans will not see the light of day again until they reach their destinations: North America; through the Panama Canal to Europe; or across the Pacific to Japan and Australasia. I give them a friendly pat, a fond farewell, to see them on their way. As they leave, the price rises again, to 160 US cents per pound. ■



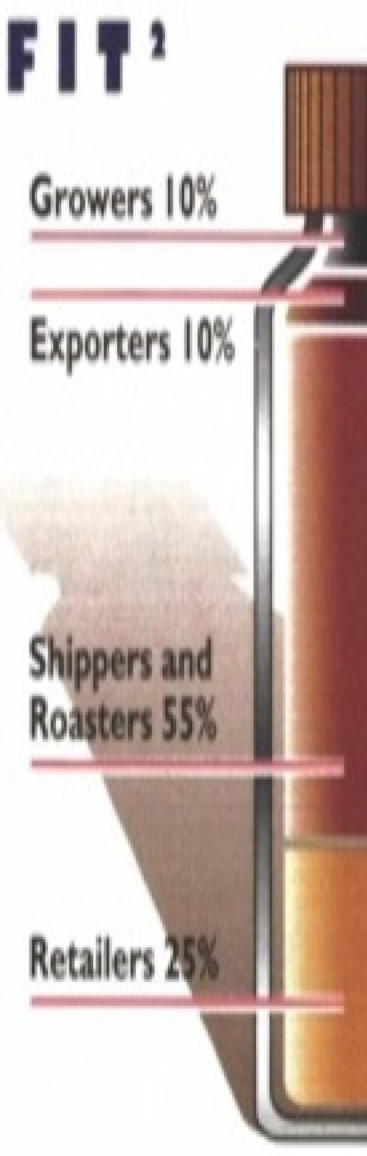


On the road: clearing a way for the coffee truck (opposite); the co-ops in Putina Punco (above); searching for coca in Callao (below).

COFFEE - THE FACTS

Coffee is the world's favourite stimulant – and second most heavily-traded commodity.[1] Yet the 20 million people who produce it live in extreme poverty.

INSTANT PROFIT[2]

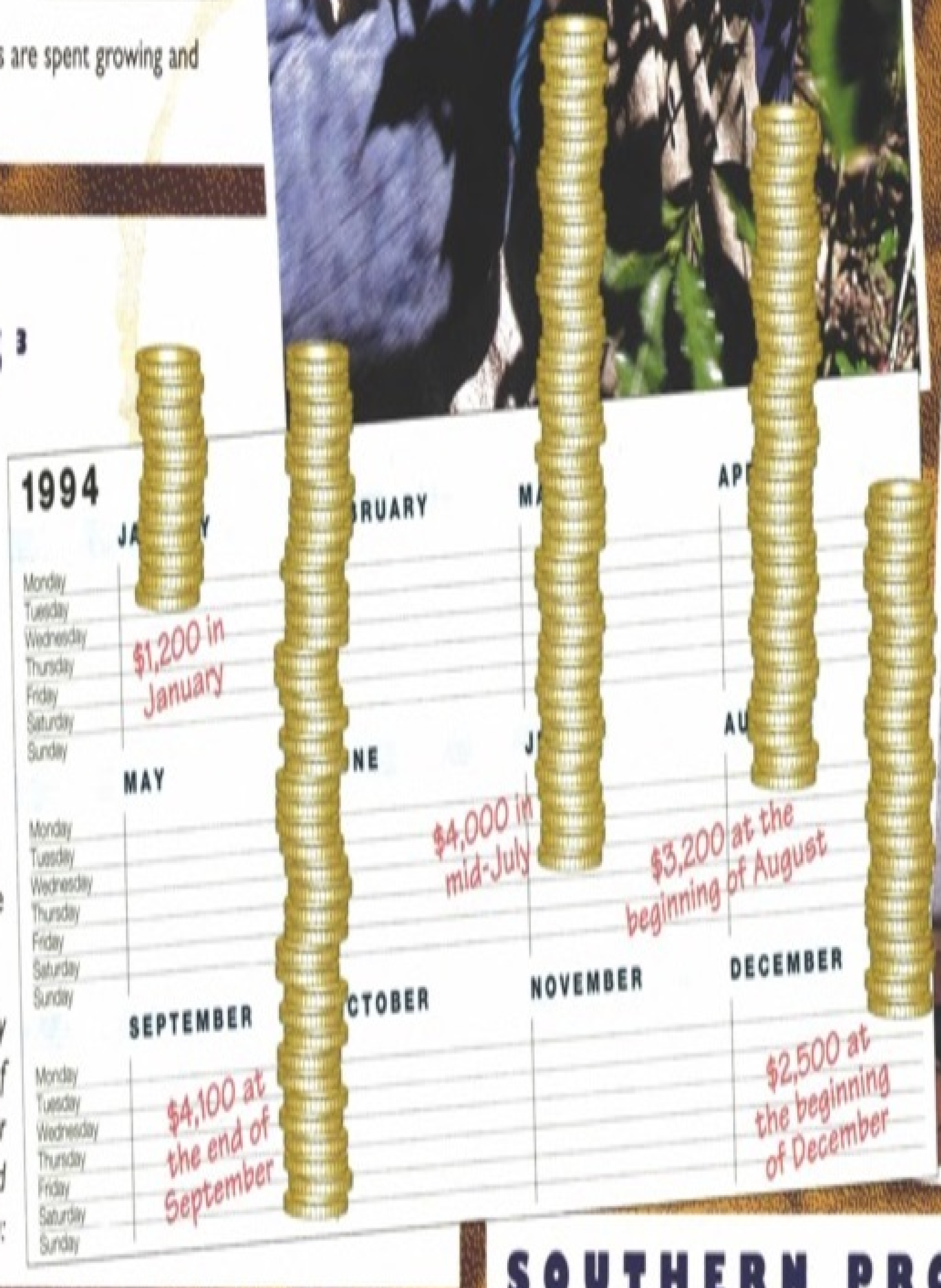


Nine-tenths of the price you pay for your instant coffee goes to the powerful companies who ship, roast and retail the product. Just one-twentieth reaches the people whose lives are spent growing and harvesting it.

MARKET MADNESS[3]

'Futures' markets are intended to secure the price of commodities in advance. In practice they are highly speculative. Prices can move very quickly, partly because of the huge amounts of money involved. Such short-term fluctuations make it difficult to plan, invest in, or earn a reliable living from coffee production.

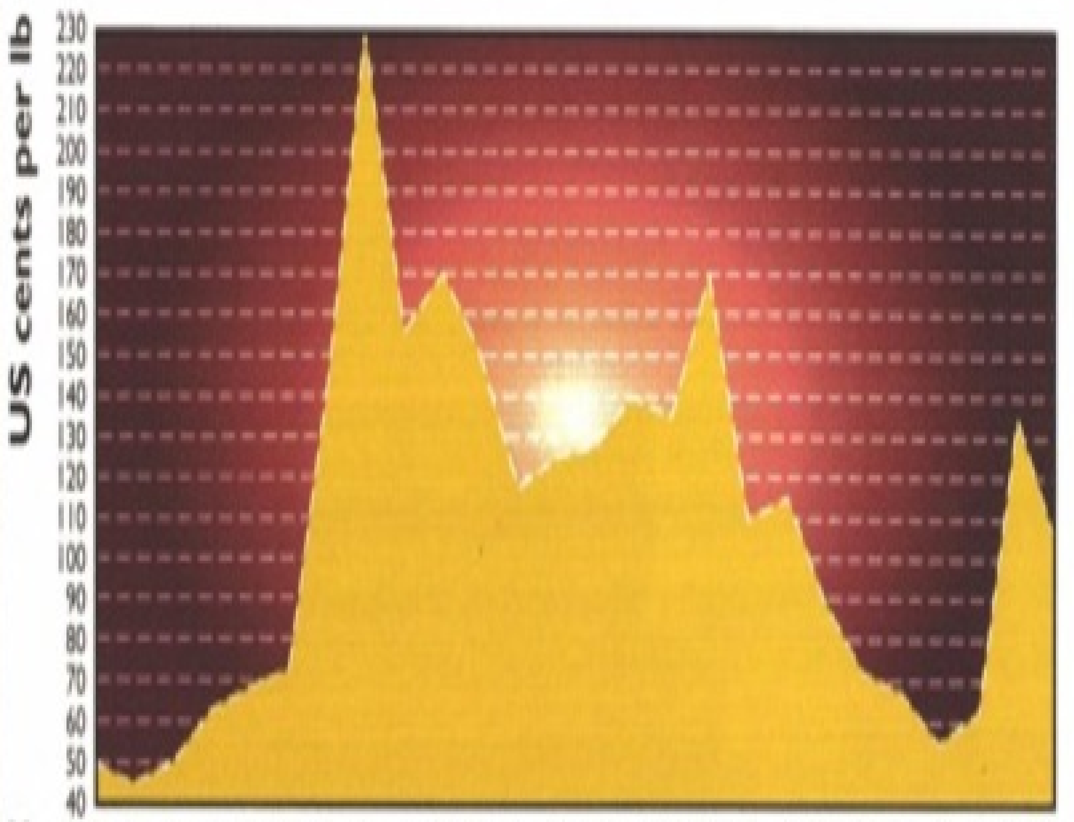
On the London Commodity Exchange during 1994 a tonne of Robusta coffee-bean 'futures' for delivery in January 1995 would have cost you:



CASINO CAFE[4]

The price of coffee is subject to wild price fluctuations on the international market. Small producers often have to sell when their harvest is ready and with little or no choice of buyer.

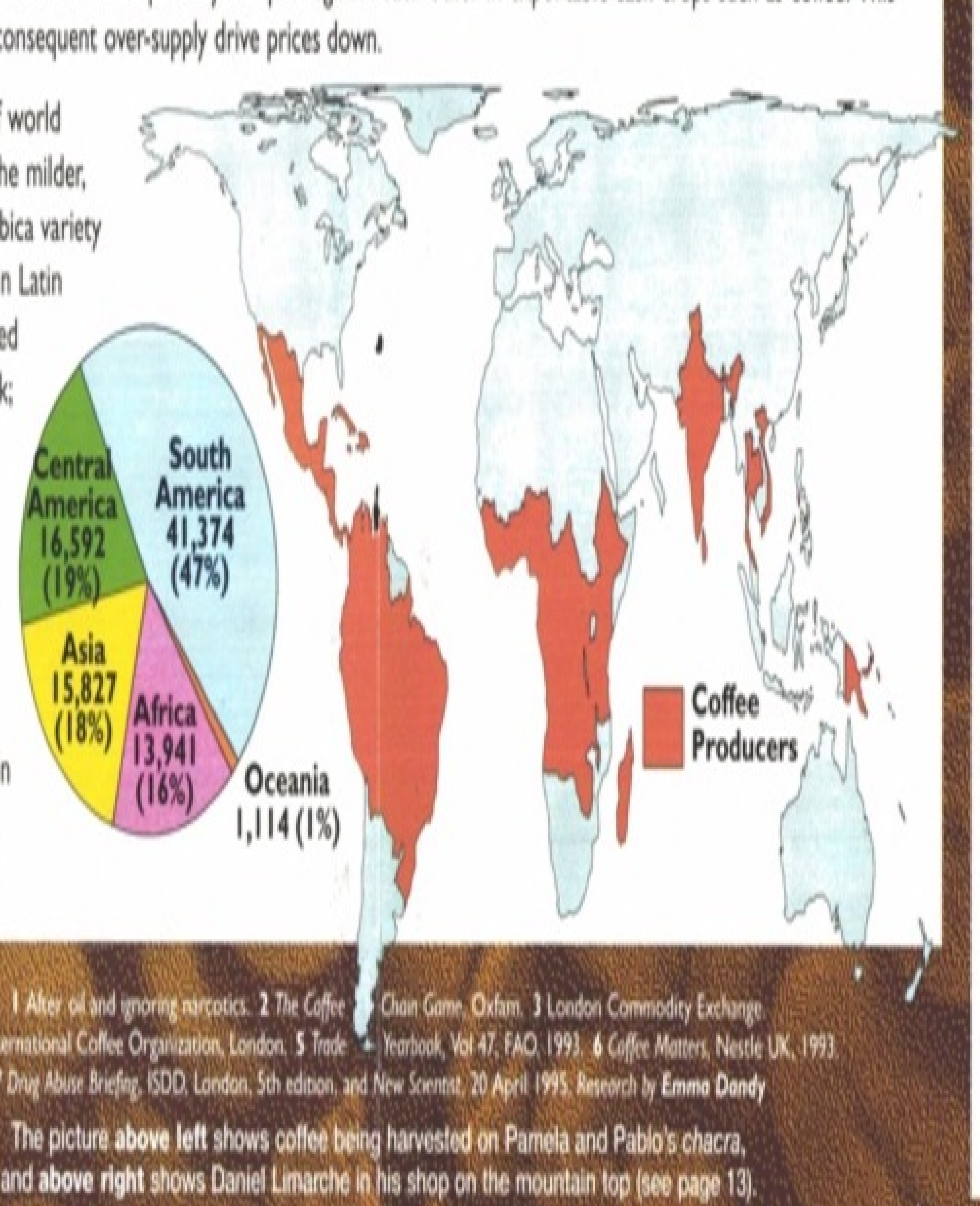
- **Price:** When the price is high large numbers of bushes are planted. Three years later these start producing, causing a glut and a price slump. As a result no new bushes are planted, causing a shortage and a price rise.
- **Weather conditions:** Frost (1975 and 1994) or drought (1984) sometimes damage the huge Brazilian coffee crop (20% of the international market) causing the international price to rise sharply.



SOUTHERN PRODUCERS[4]

Coffee grows only in the tropics – between Cancer and Capricorn. It is grown largely by small farmers who have little or no capital to fall back on. Their governments usually face huge international debts, which force them into exporting regardless. So these countries desperately compete against each other in exportable cash crops such as coffee. This competition and consequent over-supply drive prices down.

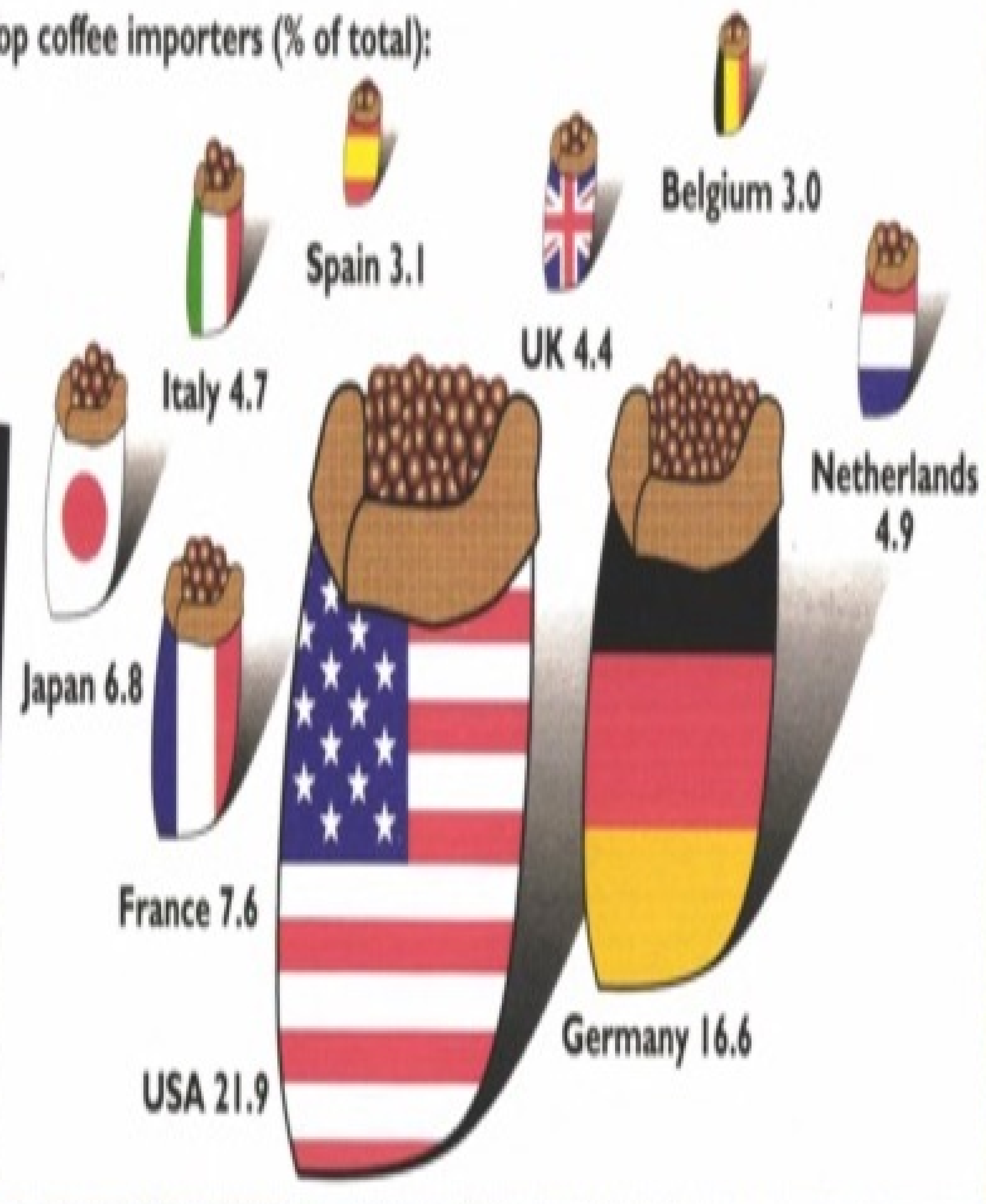
Three-quarters of world production is of the milder, higher-quality Arabica variety produced largely in Latin America and traded through New York; the remaining quarter – stronger and more suitable for 'instant' coffee – is Robusta, produced largely in Africa and traded through London.



NORTHERN CONSUMERS[5]

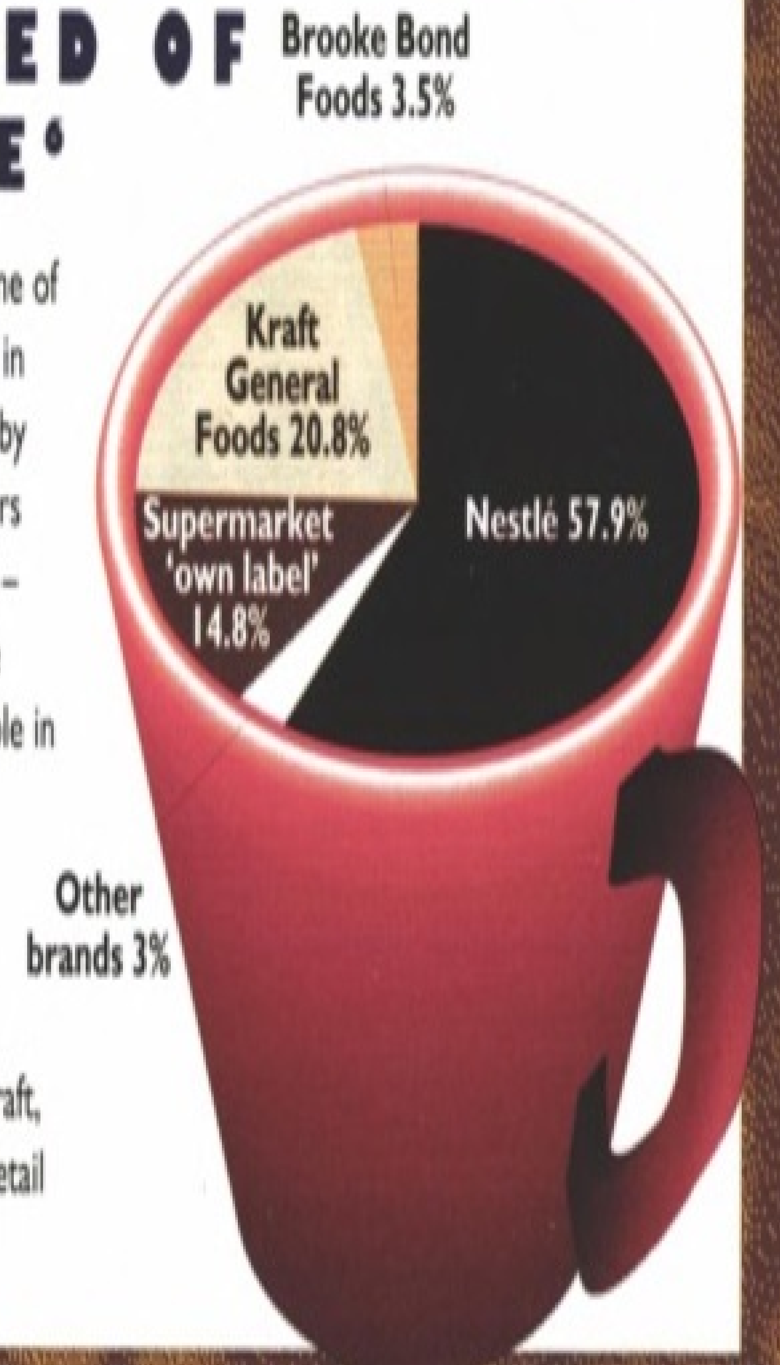
Everyone drinks coffee – but 70% of total coffee production goes onto world markets and is imported by countries in the North which control the market.

Top coffee importers (% of total):



STARVED OF CHOICE[6]

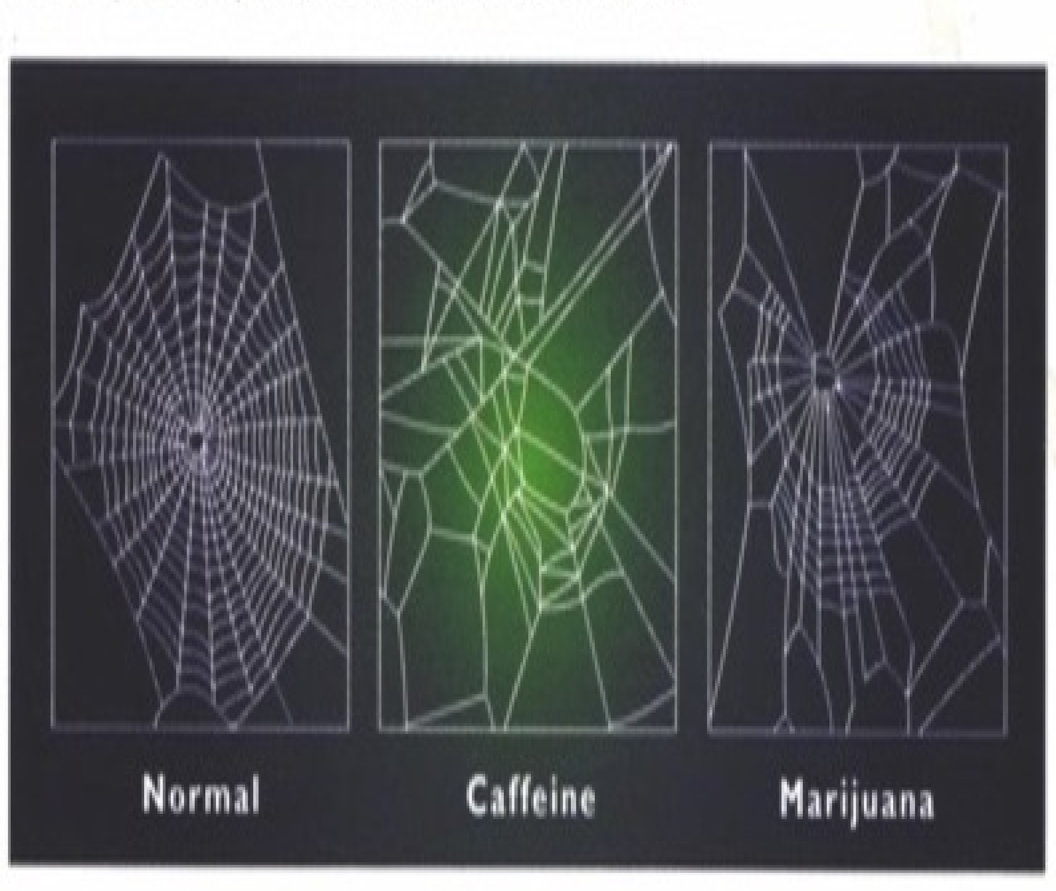
The coffee market is one of the most concentrated in the world – controlled by a few giant manufacturers and retailers. In the UK – where supermarkets are among the most profitable in the world, and 87% of the coffee sold is 'instant' – just two multinational food companies, Nestlé and Kraft, account for 78.7% of all retail instant-coffee sales.



HOOKED[7]

Caffeine is found in tea, soft drinks, pain and headache pills – and coffee. Coffee has the most caffeine of all the beverages: a single strong cup brewed directly from ground beans contains the minimum dose (150 milligrams) needed to stimulate the nervous system. In the short-term, moderate doses of 150-250 milligrams allay drowsiness and fatigue and postpone the onset of sleep. Larger doses impair performance, especially where delicate co-ordination is required. Excessive use of 500-600 milligrams (4-5 cups) a day can cause anxiety and restlessness.

When scientists in the US tried out drugs on spiders to see what happened to their webs, caffeine had a more severe effect than marijuana, making it impossible for the spider to spin more than a few random threads.



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1 After oil and ignoring narcotics. 2 *The Coffee Chain Game*, Oxfam. 3 London Commodity Exchange. 4 International Coffee Organization, London. 5 *Trade Yearbook*, Vol 47, FAO, 1993. 6 *Coffee Matters*, Nestle UK, 1993. 7 *Drug Abuse Briefing*, ISDD, London, 5th edition, and *New Scientist*, 20 April 1995. *Research by* ***Emma Dandy***

The picture **above left** shows coffee being harvested on Pamela and Pablo's chacra, and **above right** shows Daniel Limarche in his shop on the mountain top (see page 13).

The **boat,** the **roast** and **nutty mild Colombian**

Bat an eyelid and it's gone: Gregorio arrives in Britain to search for the missing millions.

Gregorio was treated like a criminal by Immigration on his arrival at London Airport. I have to welcome him to Britain with apologies for my country. He is now sitting next to Mr Wright, a director of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, in an armchair-sized leather seat in the back of an air-conditioned limousine.

'With all due respect, we are in Europe now,' says Mr Wright as we tour round the port. A genial man who has given us the most generous reception, he is in charge of the container trade with the west coast of Latin America, including Callao. Here, on the east coast of Britain, is where CECOVASA's coffee arrives.

Mr Wright points to the cranes on the deck of a container ship just in from Colombia – necessary because some Latin American ports do not have any cranes. In Callao I saw just one monster lifting-device driving around the Agricultural Exports container depot at breakneck speed belching black smoke.

'That sort of thing just won't do here,' says Mr Wright. In Felixstowe there are 18 quayside cranes, 57 rubber-tyred gantry cranes, 4 luffing cranes, 157 terminal tractor units, 135 fork-lift trucks... It has its own roads, police force, fire service, clinic... He refers a little dismissively to a 'glass palace' that Customs and Excise are constructing for themselves – Felixstowe is a private port with a robust attitude towards government.

A ship is due in from Callao but it's late so we won't be able to see it arrive. 'No matter,' says Mr Wright. 'Frankly, one container is much like another.' I can see what he means. There's a vast expanse of red, identical containers, all of them tagged by computer and piled up in perfect order as if in preparation for the building of a new pyramid.

'Coffee comes here from all over Latin America, and you can't see a single bean!' says Gregorio. 'How long does it take to get here from Peru by ship?'

'About six weeks,' says Mr Wright.

Gregorio looks a little shaken by this. Perhaps he realizes, for the first time since the flight from Peru, just how far from home he is. I hope he doesn't feel homesick already. It's a beautiful summer's day, not unlike winter in the Tambopata Valley, and after saying farewell to Mr Wright we take a stroll with the pensioners down the Felixstowe promenade, sit on the beach and watch the boats come in.

By now, and even before CECOVASA's green coffee leaves Callao, something has happened to it. It has become a 'commodity' traded on world markets. In fact, it's probably been bought and sold many times over already.

The reason for this, they tell us when we go on to visit the London Commodity Exchange (LCE), is that the amount of coffee produced around the world fluctuates from year to year. Last year, with the frost in Brazil, prices went berserk and doubled overnight. The coffee business needs to 'hedge' against this – to buy coffee 'futures' in advance at a fixed price. So coffee is often bought for delivery several months later. No-one can survive in the coffee business unless they 'hedge'. In this way, says the LCE, the market is 'stabilized'.

The trouble is that the international coffee market is anything *but* stable. Fluctuations in price are very much greater than fluctuations in coffee production. Why? Well, you can make more money more quickly by speculating on commodity 'futures' than in almost any other way. The LCE, which deals in Robusta coffee (which comes mainly from Africa), cocoa, sugar and oil 'futures', tells us proudly that the $30 billion odd 'invested' in the Exchange delivers more profit than the London Stock Exchange. (The New York Commodity Exchange, which is rumoured to be planning a take-over of the LCE, deals in mild Arabica coffee of the kind produced in

Peru and the rest of Latin America. But they both work in much the same way.)

We trek round the LCE building near Tower Bridge as if in a world of make-believe. We peer down through glass screens at young dealers in the 'pit' browsing through tabloid newspapers. They keep a weather eye on their computer screens between frantic bouts of yelling at each other, closing deals. The price of coffee is falling: the rumours of another frost in Brazil have so far proved unfounded. It is now less than 150 US cents per pound.

The international price of coffee is, however, only a small fraction of the *retail* price coffee drinkers pay for their coffee in the shops. Gregorio and I do a few simple calculations on the back of an envelope. Suppose coffee drinkers pay two US dollars for 100 grams of roast-and-ground coffee in the shops. A sack of 46 kilos of roast-and-ground would then be worth $920. CECOVASA's green coffee sells for $150 a sack. So there's a $770 difference. Gregorio and I want to know where it goes.

Some of it's gone already – on insurance, shipping from Peru and port fees at Felixstowe. More of it goes on freight to the warehouse south of the River Thames where the containers are opened, the coffee checked and stored. The warehouse does not welcome journalists. In fact the whole coffee business in Britain is shrouded in secrecy. One is forced to wonder what it is hiding.

In the case of Nestlé this might have something to do with the 40 per cent of the retail price that goes to 'roasters' like them – and the 40 per cent of coffee sales (mostly 'instant' Nescafé) in Britain which they control. What do they do for this? Well, to produce roast-and-ground coffee they cook the bean, grind it, slap it in a packet with their name on and flog it to shops ('instant' is rather more complex in the processes it goes through, but its popularity is peculiar to Britain). Nestlé do this all by themselves and won't do it for anyone else. But there are several 'contract' roasters who supply smaller companies and supermarket 'own-brands'. One of them, based near London, is kind enough to show us around, provided we don't reveal its identity.

There is only the faintest whiff of roasted coffee around the gleaming new factory – environmental regulations require that the aroma must be extracted from the chimney stack. Gregorio and I put on white coats and hats and wash our hands. 'We look like doctors,' says Gregorio, 'though I don't know what illness we're treating'.

At a loading bay we see again the familiar, friendly sight of coffee sacks, these ones from Chiapas, Mexico. They are unceremoniously ripped open with a knife and drained into a hopper. From here they go to 'cups' poised around an ultra-fast, computer-controlled, beige-coloured roasting machine.

'We're in the belly of the beast!' I whisper to Gregorio.

'And there's even an oven!' he replies.

Different varieties of beans are roasted together in exact proportions to achieve the required blend. They enter a vortex of hot air without touching the sides of the oven. The whole thing is over in just a few minutes, depending on how 'dark' the roast is. The roasted beans are then cooled in hoppers, ground, siphoned into packs sealed with inert gas, stuffed into boxes and dispatched through distributors to the shops. Every part of the process is computer-controlled to meet customer requirements, though the roasters never tell their customers exactly how this is achieved – it's a commercial secret. In all I've seen about a dozen people at work.

Gregorio has brought with him a sample of CECOVASA's run-of-the-mill *Sanor* green coffee beans. The company stages a tasting for him. A smart young man in braces sucks in the coffee from a spoon, as if it were wine, then spits it out. Should we be alarmed? Well, no: this is an art. He looks impressed, though in this business one never knows. 'Nutty. Mild Colombian. A little thin,' he pronounces.

The first two terms are highly complimentary. The third may have something to do with the soil. Has anyone ever tested it? No, says Gregorio. We look at the green beans, noting the variation in colour and size between them – not good.

'How boring it would be,' says Gregorio, 'if they were all the same. You can make them identical with chemicals, but we're organic farmers.' He tells them that some cherries of the *Caturro* coffee variety that grows low down in the Tambopata Valley are yellow when mature. I can see that he is not believed.

My mind goes back to Peru, to Pamela and Pablo, Luis and Celestina and all the other *cafeteleros*. I watch Gregorio as he tries to emulate the tasting technique. It may not be good for business, but I'm secretly glad that their coffee beans are as individual as their own sweat and blood. ■

Walls
FEAST
Gino Ginelli ICE CREAM
CANDYFLOSS POPCORN ROCK FUDGE NOUGAT
HOT & COLD DRINKS SERVED HERE
TEA COFFEE

From top to bottom: Mr Wright and the limousine; grinding the roast; testing *Sanor*; on the Felixstowe promenade.

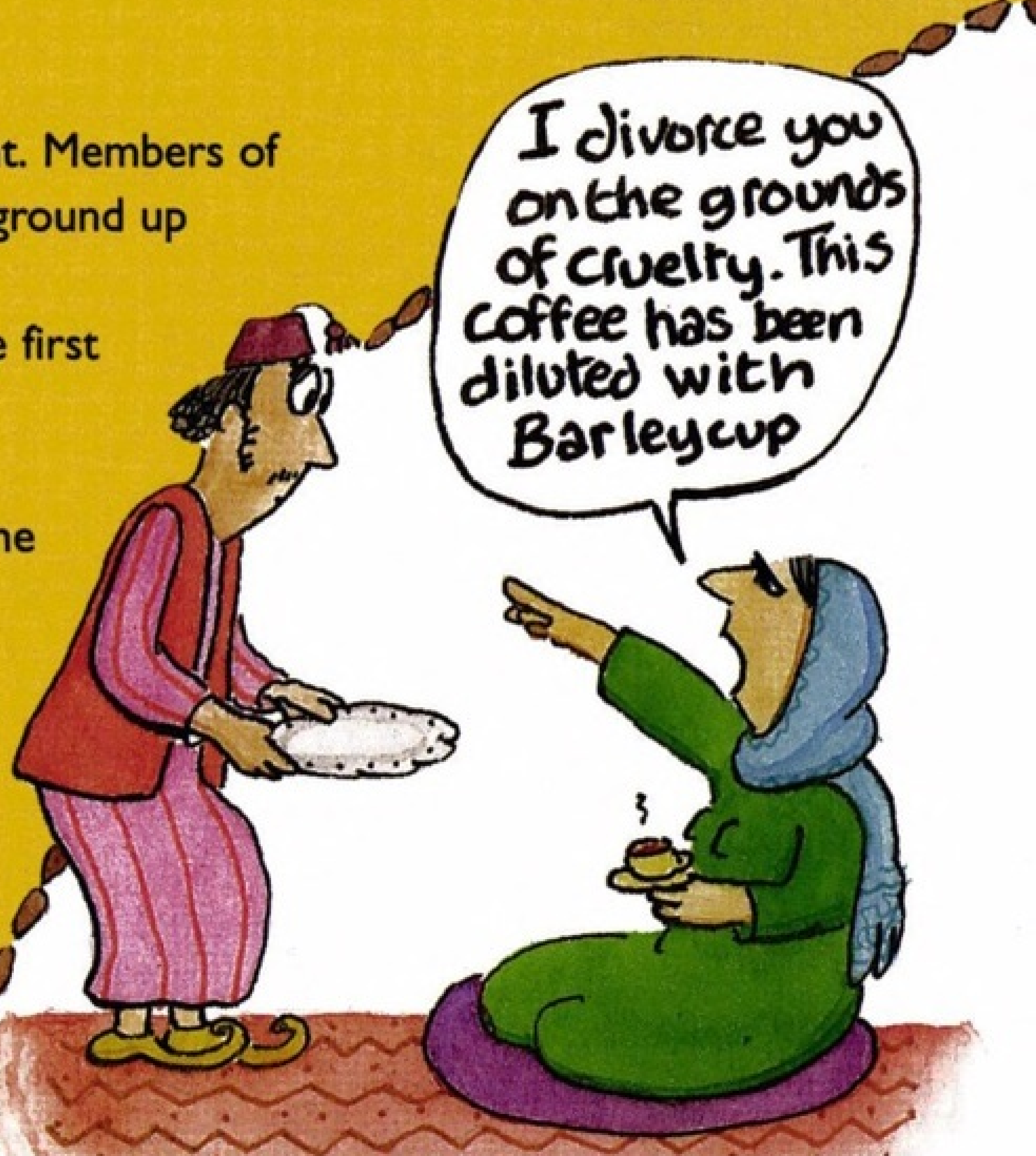
Dark as hell, strong as death, sweet as

From its origins in Africa and Arabia the rakish
the preferred beverage of consumer societies.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE BEAN...

- There is a region in Ethiopia called Kafa which, according to one legend, gave its name to the plant. Members of the Galla people in Ethiopia noticed that they got an energy boost when they ate the coffee cherry ground up with animal fat.
- After the year 1000 Arab traders brought coffee back to their homeland and cultivated it for the first time on plantations. They also began to boil the beans, creating a drink which they called *quahwa*, literally 'that which prevents sleep'.
- The world's first coffee shop, Kiva Han, opened in 1475 in Constantinople. Coffee houses become centres of political and religious debate, so much so that Sultan Amurat III had the coffee houses closed and their proprietors tortured. Coffee was declared *mekreet*, 'undesirable'. The vizier Mahomet Kolpili went further and had the coffee houses razed to the ground, their more conspicuous customers sewn into leather sacks and thrown into the Bosphorus.

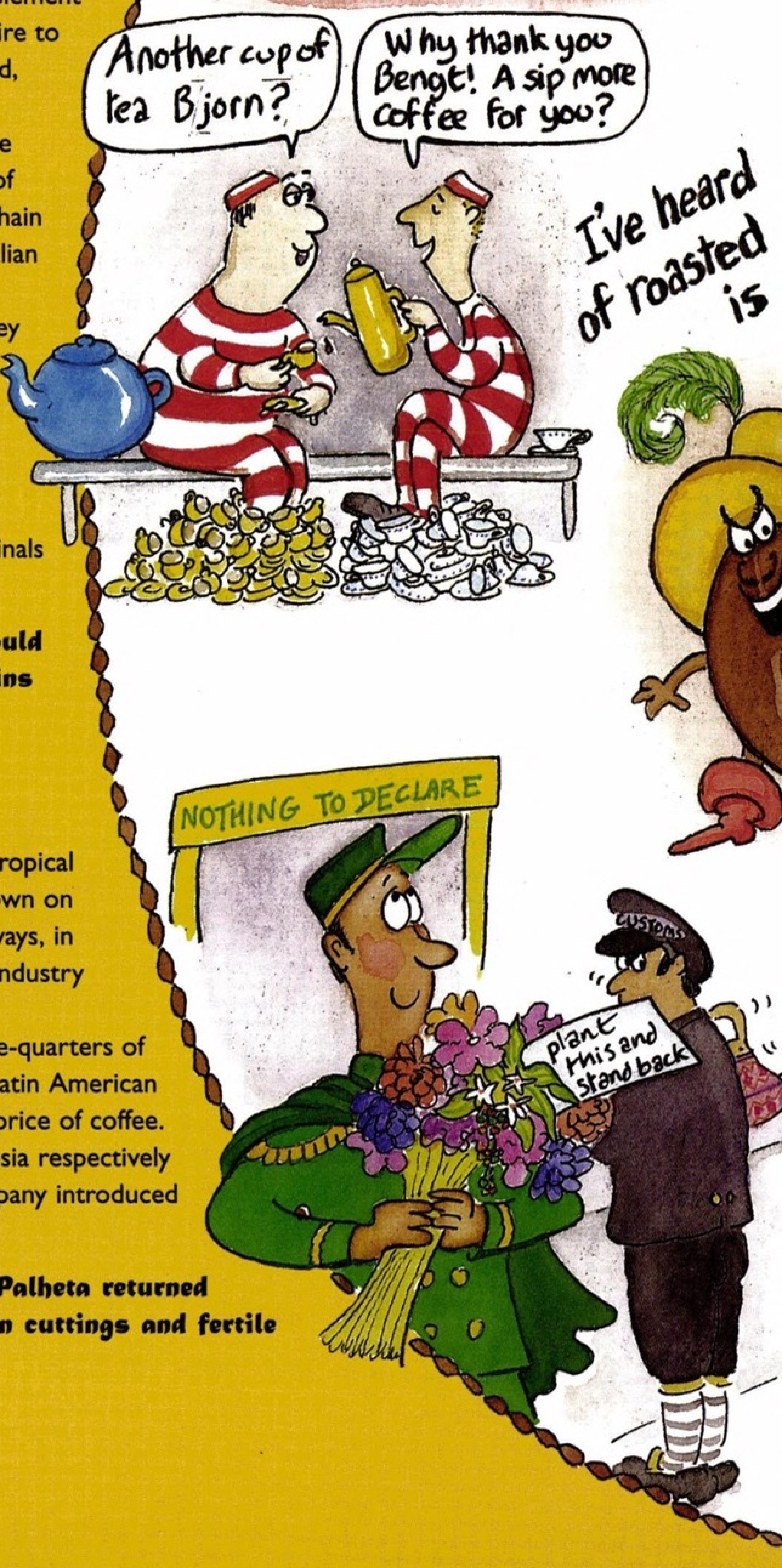
Turkish law made it legal for a woman to divorce her husband if he failed to provide her with her daily quota of coffee.


I divorce you on the grounds of cruelty. This coffee has been diluted with Barleycup

SIPS AND SALONS

- Coffee arrived in Europe in the seventeenth century with Italian traders. Pope Clement VIII initially urged his advisers to consider the favourite drink of the Ottoman Empire to be part of the infidel threat. After one sip, however, he decided to baptize it instead, making it an acceptable Christian beverage.
- In 1683 Franz Kolshitsky, a former prisoner of the Turks, bought up all the coffee beans left behind at the siege of Vienna, when the Turks were beaten by the King of Poland. Kolshitsky opened up the first coffee house in Vienna and soon headed a chain of establishments throughout Central Europe. Word spread to Paris, where the Italian Francisco Procopio dei Celtelli opened the city's first salon – the Café Procope.
- In England King Charles II raged against coffee houses as centres of sedition. They were meeting points for writers and businessmen. The Lloyds insurance business started in the back room of a coffee house in 1689.
- Convinced of the poisonous effects of both tea and coffee, King Gustavus III of Sweden ordered the reprieve of two condemned criminals, provided one drank coffee and the other tea in vast quantities every day. The College of Physicians was to dissect them when they died and confirm the dangers of the drugs. But the criminals outlived both the judge and the physicians, while the king himself was assassinated.

The French philosopher Montesquieu complained: 'Were I the King, I would close the cafés, for the people who frequent those places heat their brains in a very tiresome manner.'


Another cup of tea Bjorn?
Why thank you Bengt! A sip more coffee for you?
I've heard of roasted is
NOTHING TO DECLARE
CUSTOMS
plant this and stand back

BRAZIL RULES THE CUPS

- With the expansion of European trading empires coffee was taken back to the tropical regions of Africa and on to the Caribbean, Latin America and South Asia to be grown on estates. In Brazil the development of improved transport systems, particularly railways, in and around Rio State and the importation of slave labour led to the growth of an industry that dominated world markets.
- Until the end of the Second World War Brazil supplied between a half and three-quarters of the world coffee market. In the 1930s, in co-operation with Colombia and other Latin American countries, Brazil attempted to compel the coffee-importing countries to raise the price of coffee. But Britain and Holland had large-scale coffee plantations in East Africa and Indonesia respectively and this pioneer attempt to form a producer cartel failed. In 1938 the Nestlé company introduced spray-dried coffee in Switzerland.

Coffee first reached Brazil when Lieutenant Colonel Francisco de Melo Palheta returned from French Guiana with a bouquet from his lover in which were hidden cuttings and fertile coffee seeds.

love – how coffee conquered the world

bean has come to occupy a prime position as
***Brigitte Scheffer** recounts how it happened.*

PROHIBITION
I'll have a double coffee on the rocks
Coffee chaser over here
the juice
humans
delicious
Make life easier with Instant coffee
GLEE
The bailiffs Madam
Anything but my Gucci coffee grinder
© V.Q.

INSTANT MARKETS

- In the US demand for coffee grew sharply. The Boston Tea Party in 1773, where British tea was thrown into the sea, made drinking coffee rather than tea a patriotic duty. The industrial technologies of the late-nineteenth century transformed coffee beans – previously sold green and then cooked on the home stove – into factory-roasted and pre-packaged commodities for a mass market. The popular coffee blend Maxwell House was named after the hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, where it was first served in 1886.
- At the beginning of the twentieth century Hills Bros in the US began packing roast coffee in vacuum tins, spelling the end of the ubiquitous local roasting shops and coffee mills. In 1901 the first soluble 'instant' coffee was invented by Japanese-American chemist Satori Kato of Chicago. Decaffeinated coffee was introduced to the US in 1923 by the German importer Ludwig Roselius. Coffee sales boomed during Prohibition.

During the Second World War American soldiers were issued instant Maxwell House coffee in their ration kits.

THE BEAN EXPANDS

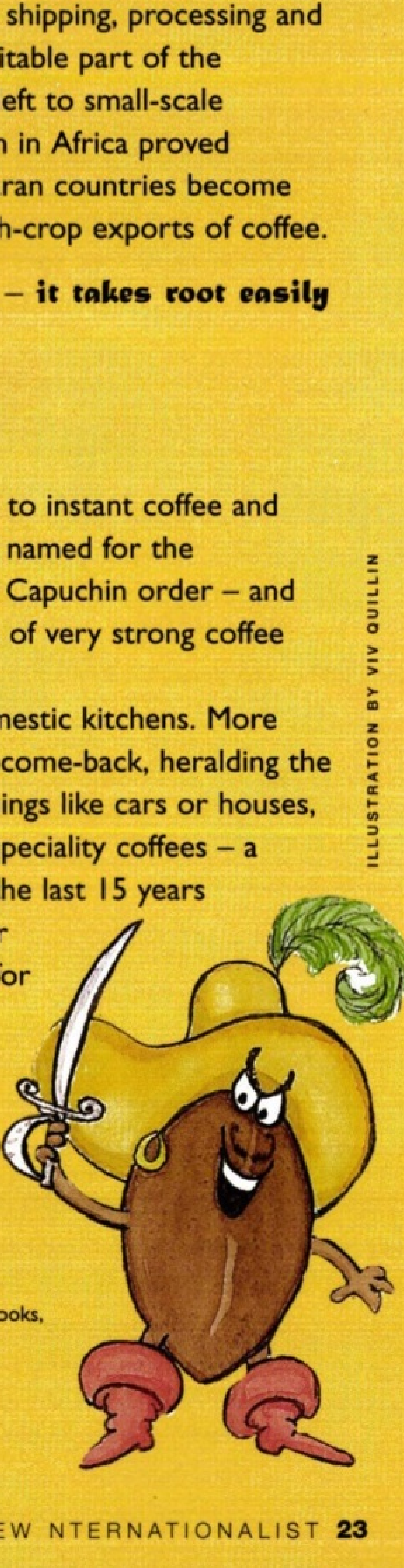
- In post-war Europe and the US coffee consumption grew way beyond its pre-war levels. Manufactured by multinational companies like General Foods, Nestlé or Allied Lyons, and backed by expensive advertising campaigns, instant coffee soon came to occupy a large sector of the British and US markets. Advertisements promised to transform women from household drudges into ladies of leisure by simplifying the coffee-making process.
- Profits from the coffee trade began to concentrate in the shipping, processing and retailing sector. The most labour-intensive, risky and unprofitable part of the operation – growing and processing the bean itself – was left to small-scale producers. The strongly-flavoured Robusta coffee grown in Africa proved particularly suited to instant coffees. Some 17 sub-Saharan countries become heavily dependent for their economic survival upon cash-crop exports of coffee.

Coffee is the world's most 'democratic' plant – it takes root easily and cohabits well with its neighbours.

SMALL INDULGENCES

- Discerning drinkers, however, remained resistant to instant coffee and opted for the real thing. Italians favoured *cappuccino* – named for the resemblance of its colour to the robes of the monks of the Capuchin order – and *espresso*. Turks and Arabs stayed faithful to endless tiny cups of very strong coffee flavoured with cardamom.
- Meanwhile coffee-making paraphernalia proliferated in domestic kitchens. More recently, gourmet and organic blends have begun to make a come-back, heralding the return of the coffee-shop. When there's no cash for 'big' things like cars or houses, avid consumers spend extra money on 'small' luxuries like speciality coffees – a phenomenon known as the 'small-indulgence syndrome'. In the last 15 years the number of coffee bars in the US has leapt from 250 to over 5,000. Some sought-after beans, like Jamaican Blue Mountain, sell for three or four times the usual price.

'The treadmills in our tiny, straw-lined cages whir ever faster. I'm warning you, there's a capitalist conspiracy here. Workers of the world: stop sipping!'
Helen Cordes, Utne Reader, on the dangers of coffee used as a stimulant at work.



Sources: *History of Food* Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat (Blackwell 1992); *Commodities* Nick Rowling (Free Association Books, London 1987); *Modern Africa* (Basil Davidson Longman, London 1984); *Utne Reader* no 66.

Brigitte Scheffer is a freelance journalist specializing in the Middle East and Latin America.

ILLUSTRATION BY VIV QUILLIN

Awe in the superstore

From the citadels of consumption to a Soho bar – pain and pleasure brought together…

'YOU see,' says Peter Cushman, 'the coffee market in Britain is just about the most concentrated there is. There are two big manufacturers, Nestlé and Kraft, and two big retailers, Sainsbury and Tesco. Between them they sell well over half the coffee in this country.'

Gregorio and I are in Chipping Norton, about half-an-hour's drive north-west of Oxford. It's a medium-sized, prosperous country town. The superstore is run by the Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester branch of the Co-operative Retail Society. This may sound improbable, but the Co-op – though not in the same league for groceries as the 'big two' – is one of the largest retailers in Britain. In Chipping Norton it's the smartest superstore in town, part of a brand-new shopping mall. Peter Cushman is a young public-relations manager who seems genuinely interested in our work. We walk down marble-floored aisles in hushed awe as if entering a cathedral, a citadel of consumption.

I ask Gregorio what he makes of it all. I am conjuring up lurid images in my mind that play with words like 'gluttony' or 'greed', and contrast them starkly with 'scarcity' or 'sickness'. Strange to think, as Peter Cushman tells us, that the Co-op in Chipping Norton started 100 years ago when local people clubbed together to buy a railway-truck-load of coal.

To my surprise Gregorio is not particularly impressed by the store itself. 'Well,' he says, 'it's certainly got a lot of things in it'.

'A *lot* of things,' I add.

'Yes, but there are stores like this in Lima.'

'Not quite like *this*, surely. And not in Juliaca or Putina Punco.'

'In Peru almost everything we buy is local. I mean, vegetables from *Thailand*? And *bananas*?'

'And coffee,' I remind him.

'That's the big difference. In the prices, I mean.'

'Let me assure you,' continues Peter Cushman, 'it's really competitive. Everything's computerized. Every product we sell has to justify its shelf-space. Our margins – the difference between our buying and selling price – are about 15 per cent of the retail price for coffee. On other items we expect to make 25 per cent. Supermarket "own-brand" coffees have been taking market share off the big manufacturers by offering lower prices, though all coffee prices have gone up quite a bit since last year.'

This is one of the features of the retail price of coffee. Though it may go up when the international price rises – like last year – it rarely goes down when the price falls, as it is doing now. The rules of free-market competition, which suggest that at least *someone* should start selling cheaper, don't seem to apply. This is one reason why the retail price of coffee is much more stable than the international price; and one way the manufacturers make their profits.

'It's a strange phenomenon,' continues Peter Cushman. 'Consumption of coffee stays much the same or increases slightly year by year. When prices go up, customers might "trade down" for a while to a cheaper brand, but they return to their old brand quite quickly. They never seem to drink less coffee.'

He tells us an odd tale. He has a link with a co-operative that produces Blue Mountain coffee in Jamaica – by far the rarest and most expensive in the world, selling for three or four times the normal price. As an experiment the Co-op offered a free, 'blind' tasting of Blue Mountain to some of its customers in the store. The overwhelming response was unfavourable: 'It's not like my usual brand,' the customers said. Yet people in the coffee business talk of the coffee market in Britain, and particularly the 'instant' market that accounts for 80 per cent of the coffee sold, as 'sophisticated'.

'Coffee is like wine was 20 years ago, when people drank uniform blends,' says Peter Cushman.

What the manufacturers aim to do by blending is to produce an absolutely predictable product with which customers, goaded by hugely expensive and subtle advertising campaigns, will identify. They become 'loyal'. They don't like change – and the manufacturers don't want them to. The great joy of coffee, the subtlety of its flavours from a host of different soils and a multitude of small farmers around the world, all this is lost.

Well, perhaps not quite. Like wine- and beer-drinkers before them, coffee-drinkers are gradually becoming more sophisticated. The so-called 'gourmet' coffee market – with a price-tag to match – is booming, particularly in the US. Why, in Britain they've even begun to produce a contradiction in terms – 'gourmet' instant coffees. Something must be up.

So Gregorio and I take a sample of CECOVASA's *Sanor* green coffee beans to Cardew & Co, a long-established 'speciality' coffee merchant in the Covered Market in the centre of Oxford. They've been selling Peruvian coffee here for 40 years. John Durkin, the manager, confesses that he stocks it because there are a couple of customers who keep coming back for more, despite its bad reputation. He's pretty sceptical until we produce the *Sanor* sample. He likes the look of it, and he doesn't often get the chance to talk to a farmer. He and Gregorio get down to business.

Mr Durkin will take a sample and have it tested. There will be problems. The market for it would have to be 'developed'. The minimum practicable sale would be one 'lot', a 250-sack container, equivalent to one-and-a-half million cups of coffee. Of course, the quality might vary from year to year with the climate in the Valley... But, who knows? There's another shop in Cambridge. The academics of Oxford and Cambridge are a pretty well-heeled, well-travelled, 'gourmet' bunch.

On one thing they're both agreed, at least in principle. If a deal can be done, Mr Durkin will tell CECOVASA the retail price he intends to sell it for. They'd go through it together to see who got what. Try as I might, I can't see this working out at $770 per sack for Mr Durkin and $150 for Gregorio.

& CO OXFORD
Coffee Merchants
rd 242315

Shelf-space standards (opposite); dealing with Mr Durkin (above); reunion with Darran in Soho (right).

Gregorio and I set off for London. We want to talk to someone about the vast amounts of money that are spent on advertising. Nestlé are reputed to spend upwards of $60 million every year on marketing Nescafé in Britain. The rest must keep pace if they are to stand a chance – advertising works.

Bruce McKinnon at Media Natura, an advertising and PR agency that works with Cafédirect, says: 'We have to compete against commercial coffee brands with huge promotional budgets – so our limited budgets have to go as far as possible.' This means focusing on the positive side of fair trade and finding those people who are most likely to respond. Media Natura calls these people 'semi-ethicals' – people who have an awareness but not a deep understanding of the issues. 'Every coffee company out there will want to win back customers they have lost to fair trade,' he says, 'but no company has what we've got – the support of thousands of producers in Latin America and East Africa'.

The great joy of coffee, the subtlety of its flavours from a host of different soils and a multitude of small farmers around the world, all this is lost.

All this is just a little bit too serious. It's easy to forget just how proud the *cafeteleros* of the Tambopata Valley are of their coffee, how much they want their drinkers to enjoy it or how deep runs the irony of what they must suffer to give us our daily dose.

So we make for Soho, a place where the pleasures of life have always defeated their enemies, thanks in part to Italians who run bars that are said to sell the best coffee in London. We're early for a reunion with Darran Rees, the photographer who came with us to Peru. We sit in a bar and drink strong *cappuccinos*, watching the customers come and go and a dispute over parking escalate into civil war.

We catch sight of Darran in the street, just as he sees us in the bar. It's a strange moment, the first time we've met since Peru. We can't quite seem to recognize each other. Darran has brought with him, in a pack he's marked 'Peruvian Best 95', the beans they roasted especially for his photographs in Juliaca.

'This bar is really my office. I sort of live here,' says Darran.

And somehow, as he hurtles in and out of the bar to make calls on his mobile phone and arrange for us to see the wonderful images he has made, it all seems to fit. His photographs have brought the pain and the pleasure together at last. ■

enjoy!

The well-informed coffee drinker's directory

In less than ten years the fair-trade movement has grown rapidly across Europe, North America and Australasia. High-quality coffee is one of its leading products.

THE FAIR-TRADE CRITERIA

All of the brands and organizations quoted here endorse the following broad principles:

- An equal partnership of mutual respect between producers and consumers
- A long-term commitment to purchase
- Informed consumers
- A guaranteed minimum price to be paid to producers, which may involve a 'surcharge' or premium over and above the world-market price
- No intermediaries – direct buying from the producers
- Control of production by the producers
- A commitment to improve social conditions for producers
- Care for the environment by encouraging organic methods of growing coffee

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

TRADE AID IMPORTERS
PO Box 35 049
Christchurch
Tel: (3) 385 3535
Fax: (3) 385 3536

Trade Aid works in partnership with more than 80 self-help craft/producer groups in developing countries worldwide. It aims to establish real partnerships with those groups in order to assist them in achieving self-reliance. Coffee and tea form approximately 16 per cent of Trade Aid's total sales of $2,246,717.

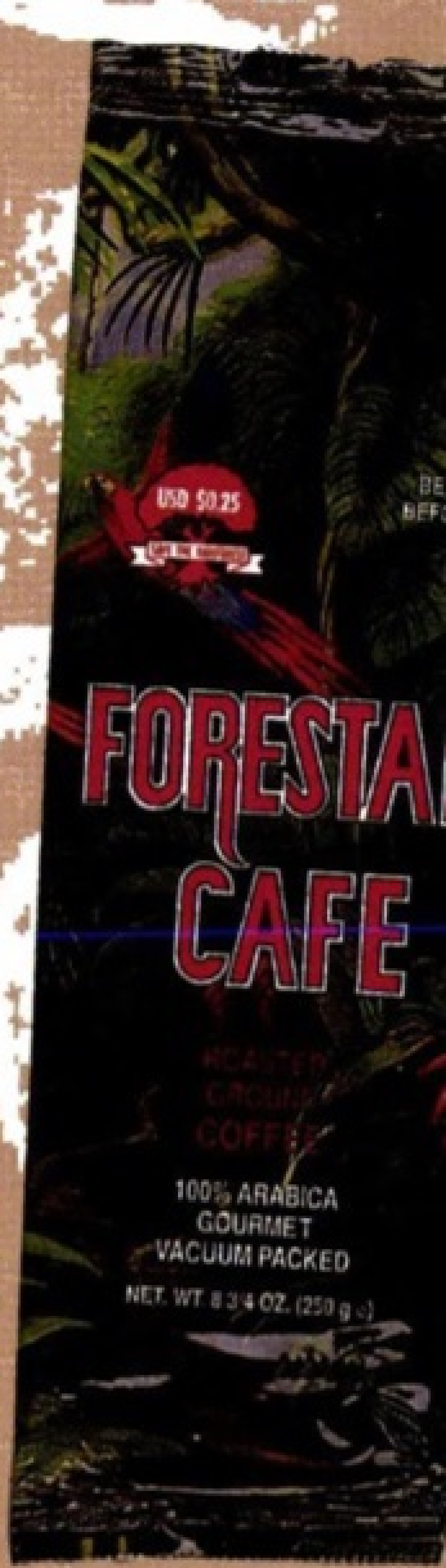
One of the groups which Trade Aid supports is the **Atiu Coffee Factory**, a small company on the tiny island of Atiu, which is one of the Cook Islands in the South Pacific. The Factory is Atiu's biggest employer. Growers on Atiu and neighbouring Aitutaki now have a guaranteed market after the failure of other export earnings. Twenty-two family-operated farms sell beans directly to the factory at prices which compare favourably on the international market. The latest Atiu coffee has a revolutionary one-way freshness valve believed to be the first of its kind in Aotearoa. With a gentle squeeze of the pack customers can enjoy the tantalizing aroma before they buy. The coffee is sold as beans or ground in medium or dark roast through Trade Aid's 35 shops, or by mail order round the world.

ATIU COFFEE
MEDIUM ROAST WHOLE BEANS
ATIU COFFEE
DARK ROAST GROUND

Carolyn Davies

AUSTRALIA

COMMUNITY AID ABROAD (CAA) TRADING
PO Box 184 Kilkenny
SA 5009
Australia
Tel: (618) 341 1422
Fax: (618) 341 2958
Freephone enquiries on shops (008) 088 455



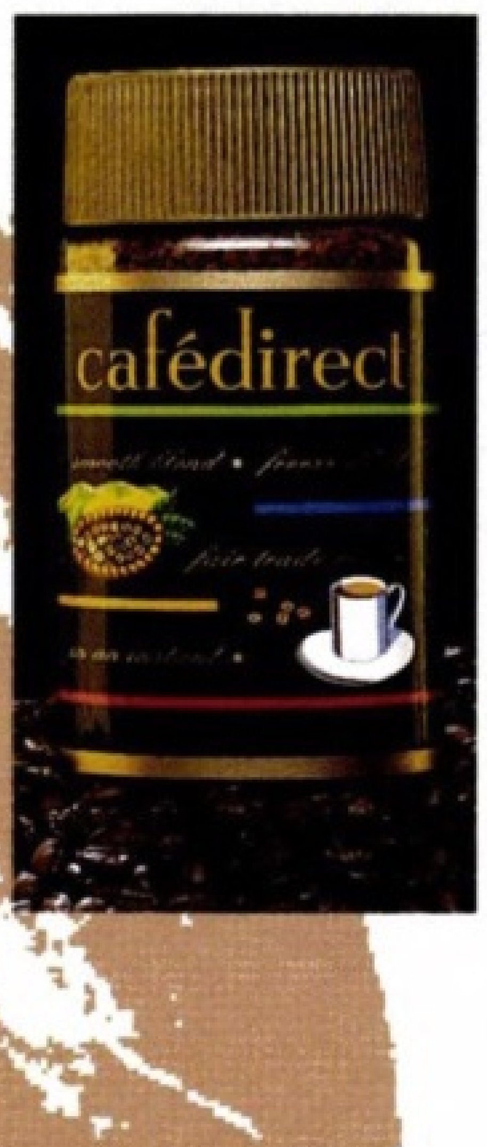
Close contact with coffee-producing partners provides 'grounds for a fairer deal', according to CAA. Rather than buy on the open market, CAA Trading has established a working relationship with coffee growers. The **Coocafe** co-operative in the north-western region of Guanecaste in Costa Rica is one example. The co-operative – six groups of local farmers – aims to sell its coffee at a fair price, at the same time mobilizing funds to preserve the environment. Coocafe have started a large reforestation programme to protect nearby tropical forests. Every kilo of the ***Forestal*** coffee sold ensures one US dollar is put back into the reforestation programme. Coocafe provides many other benefits to members. These include a provident fund, healthcare, low-interest loans and a non-profit, general-produce shop. CAA Trading sells several types of coffee, including Coocafe, by mail order or through their 15 shops throughout Australia.

George Fisher

BRITAIN

CAFÉDIRECT
10a Queensferry Street,
Edinburgh
EH2 4PG.
Tel: (0131) 220 3484
Fax: (0131) 220 3465.

Equal Exchange (UK), Twin Trading, Oxfam Trading and Traidcraft have come together to produce and promote Britain's leading fair-traded coffee brand, which is now available in most retail outlets in both ground and premium freeze-dried form. It is a rich, smooth blend of coffee produced by co-operative farmers in Latin America and Africa, including **CECOVASA** in Peru.



THE FAIR TRADE FOUNDATION
7th Floor Regent House
89 Kingsway
London WC2B 6RH
Tel: (0171) 405 4942
Fax: (0171) 405 5943

Established by CAFOD, Christian Aid, New Consumer, Oxfam, Traidcraft Exchange and the World Development Movement, the Foundation sets independent criteria to recognize and endorse fairly-traded products such as coffee, tea, cocoa and chocolate with the Fairtrade Mark.

David Ransom

BRIDGEHEAD
Organically Grown
Produit de Culture Organique
COFFEE-CAFÉ
FINE GRIND/DARK ROAST
MOUTURE FINE/RÔTI NOIR
300 g
Imported from Mexico
Importé du Mexique

CANADA

BRIDGEHEAD TRADING
20 James St
Ottawa,
Ont KP2 OT6
Tel: (800) 463 4143

Canada's Bridgehead Trading is the foremost fair-trader of coffee in the country and is supplied from production co-ops in Nicaragua (where it began ten years ago in solidarity with the Sandinista revolution), Mexico, Tanzania and the Dominican Republic. The **Esperanza** ('Hope') co-operative in the small town of El Cacao in the Dominican Republic is typical. It has established two small shops, a clinic and a pharmacy and also provides processing and warehousing facilities for both domestic and export coffee sales. Esperanza now has over 700 members. Bridgehead imports green coffee beans and transforms them into a number of blends, from the full-bodied Nicaraguan to Mexican organic and the more mellow Dominican. The production co-ops which Bridgehead deals with are democratically-run by smallholders. In 1994-95 Bridgehead imported 125,000 pounds (57,000 kilos) of coffee with an approximate net worth of $237,000. They have a mail-order catalogue containing coffee, tea, food and craft items.

Richard Swift

EUROPE

THE MAX HAVELAAR FOUNDATION
Postbus 1252
3500 BG Utrecht
The Netherlands
Tel: (30) 334602
Fax: (30) 332992

One of the pioneers of fair-traded coffee, the Foundation was set up after Mexican coffee farmers told the Dutch development-aid organization Solidaridad in 1986 that, as far as they were concerned, there would be no need for development aid if they received a fair price for their coffee. The Foundation owns the Max Havelaar Quality Mark which controls the manufacturers who make use of it. It is applied to coffee and cocoa. Almost $20 million has already been paid directly to producers from the fair-trade surcharge alone. The Quality Mark is available in almost all major Dutch stores as well as 300 of the 675 town halls, all provincial government buildings, at the Dutch Lower House of Parliament, in some ministries and in the European Parliament. The Quality Mark has been extended to Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, France and Luxembourg. Transfair, a similar initiative, was established in Germany in 1993 and has now been launched in Austria as well as in Japan through mail order.

Rita Oppenhuizen

UNITED STATES

EQUAL EXCHANGE
101 Tosca Drive
Stoughton
MA 02072
Tel: (617) 344 7227
Fax: (617) 344 7240

EQUAL EXCHANGE
Helping Small Farmers Bring You
THE PERFECT CUP

Established in 1986 Equal Exchange is now the largest alternative-trade coffee company in the US. In 1994 the company sold half a million pounds (200,000 kilos) of coffee worth $1.85 million. Equal Exchange works directly with small-scale farmer co-operatives in Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru. Between 1989 and 1993 it paid out $750,000 above the price co-op members would normally have received for their crop. Their Costa Rican partner is Coocafe, (see 'Australia' above). In Mexico, the Union of Indigenous Communities of the Isthmus Region **(UCIRI)** runs a hardware and farm-supply store, healthcare services and its own agricultural extension and training programmes. The company also supports sustainable agriculture and encourages producers to convert to organic farming. There is a growing market for chemical-free coffee in the US and farmers receive a premium for certified organic coffees. Equal Exchange offers five different styles of its premium brands: from ***Full City*** ('sweet, full-bodied, aromatic, delicately complex') to ***French*** ('for serious coffee drinkers, a dominant, intense, bittersweet flavour with no acidic characteristics').

Wayne Ellwood

MEXICO

CAFÉ LA SELVA,
Jardin Centenario
No 4 local 3
Coyoacan
cp 04000
México DF
Tel/Fax: (5) 44 76 52

Café La Selva is now selling and serving organic coffee direct to consumers from the **Union de Ejidos de la Selva** coffee-producing co-operative based in Comitan, Chiapas, one of the longest-standing suppliers to Cafédirect (see NI 251). The first of its kind in the country, the shop opened in May 1995 after an extremely difficult year for the producers, following the Chiapas uprising in January 1994. Its purpose is to promote the consumption of high-quality coffee in Mexico, increase public awareness of the Union's work in the social and environmental fields and expand alternative sales outlets. A welcome addition, too, to any self-respecting tourist's itinerary.

José Juarez Varela

SOUTH AFRICA

Fair-trade coffee is not yet widely available. Many of the organizations listed here deal with African producers and can offer advice on where to get fair-traded coffee.

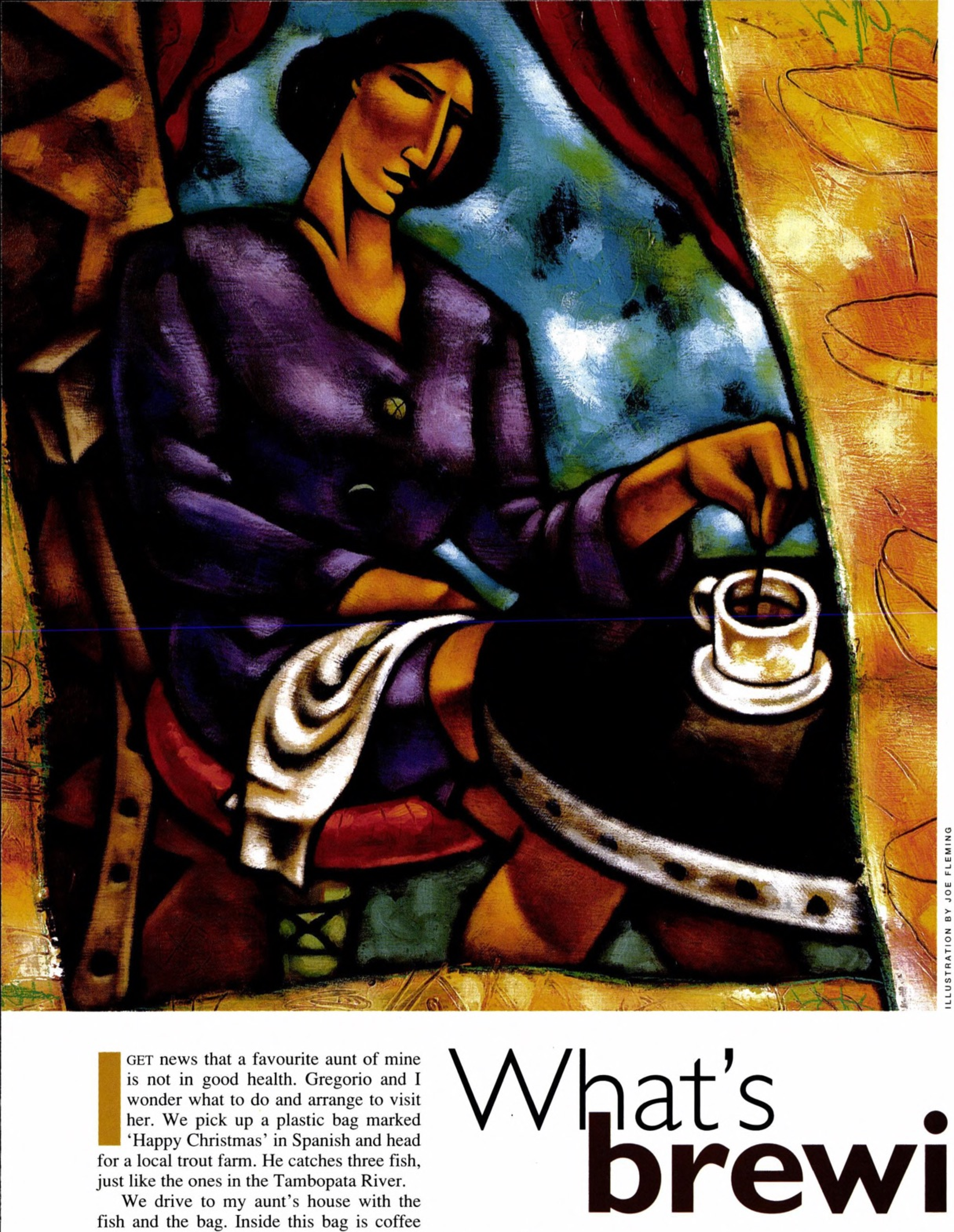


ILLUSTRATION BY JOE FLEMING

What's brewing

David Ransom argues that change is coming and the fair-trade movement is showing the way.

I GET news that a favourite aunt of mine is not in good health. Gregorio and I wonder what to do and arrange to visit her. We pick up a plastic bag marked 'Happy Christmas' in Spanish and head for a local trout farm. He catches three fish, just like the ones in the Tambopata River.

We drive to my aunt's house with the fish and the bag. Inside this bag is coffee you cannot buy in supermarkets: *café pergamino*, 'parchment' coffee, complete with the husk and from a single farm in the Tambopata Valley. It was given to me on her *chacra* by Victoria, who is a member of the San Jorge co-operative. The beans are irregular and doubtless there are stray mementoes of the Valley in there too, though we haven't found any yet.

At my aunt's house, overseen by Gregorio, I take a baking tin, rest it on the stove, put the *pergamino* in the tin and begin to stir vigorously with a wooden spoon. I had assumed, because the husk is always removed, that leaving it on during roasting would damage the flavour. But Gregorio insists that it is improved. Slowly the house fills with the aroma of roasting coffee. Gregorio adds a little sugar. We grind the roasted beans, infuse the grounds in a pot of hot water, and there it is – smooth, mild, perhaps a hint of nuttiness in there somewhere, and most certainly not the slightest bit 'thin'. The three of us drink a toast to my aunt's good health, to Victoria and the coffee farmers of the Valley.*

So it is a simple matter to roast the bean and make a good cup of coffee. Victoria has done about 90 per cent of the work that went into making it back in Peru and certainly everything that determined its quality. Yet she never sees 90 per cent of what we routinely pay for it in the shops. How is this possible?

Well, the free-market explanation goes something like this. Manufacturers and retailers in the North have high costs. They invest in smart machinery and marketing. They pay high wages. It's only because people in the North are affluent that they can afford to spend their money on all that expensive coffee.

In the South, on the other hand, costs are low. Labour is cheap and there are no machines to pay for. If coffee farmers made a better living other poor people would want to join them, too much coffee would then be produced, prices would fall and market forces would duly reassert themselves, taking us back to where we began.

A perverse variant of this explanation informs the 'structural adjustment' policies that have been enforced throughout the South, including Peru, by the world's financial establishment. Because Southern societies are poor and in debt to the North they must cut government spending on things like education and health, 'privatize' everything and export more commodities like coffee. In this way the supply is increased, prices are reduced – and producers are impoverished.

So the rich in the North are rich because they are rich, the poor in the South are poor because they are poor. We are faced with an explanation that explains nothing, a circular argument merely describing the status quo.

The status quo is, however, unsustainable. Forty years of coffee-production in the Tambopata Valley threaten to destroy an entire regional environment. Not a single technical adviser, soil scientist, agricultural engineer or coffee expert has ever visited the Valley in all that time. The coffee business from the North has based itself in Juliaca or Lima, London, Tokyo or New York, and bought the product for peanuts.

Is it really beyond the wit of humanity, or of such a profitable trade, that even *one* environmental adviser, a single doctor, should be available to the people of Putina Punco? Can a trade that rewards its producers so little, that preys on their poverty in this way, be anything other than contemptible?

The outrage and sheer irresponsibility of this are hard to credit. But 'consumer' societies are impervious. They prefer not to see such things because they're bad for business. The consumer outranks the producer as a matter of principle and must be satisfied. Far better, and more profitable, to spread the mists of ignorance, peddle mythic images and flog the brew to aspirant power-breakfasters and lovers.

There is, however, something rather special about coffee. As coffee-growing has expanded in the last 50 years, it has mainly been taken up by small-scale farmers. Working with the same crop in the same place they have, quite naturally, formed themselves into co-operatives to share common problems. So a significant proportion of the world's supply of coffee is potentially controlled by the people who produce it.

This has created a unique opportunity, seized originally in 1989 by the Max Havelaar Foundation in the Netherlands. Other imaginative organizations have followed its example, creating a fair-trade network (outlined on pages 26 and 27) that now links consumers to producers around the world. The challenge it has accepted is to do this by taking pleasure in truthfulness and respect between people – and, goddammit, by promoting the enjoyment of truly delicious coffees that put the mass-produced blends to shame!

CECOVASA is now starting to do business with Max Havelaar, Transfair in Germany and Cafédirect in Britain. I ask Gregorio to tell me, frankly, what he thinks of them.

'Well,' he says a little guardedly, knowing what I want to hear, 'it's only in the last couple of years we have begun to explore the possibilities of the *comercio alternativo*, of fair trade. So it's still a bit early to tell how it might work out. These things take time, you know.

'But it's already clear to us that in principle fair trade is very much in our best interests. There is a much more direct relationship with them than with most of our buyers. Fair trade offers us a ten-per-cent premium over the market price, which is necessary because we have to work harder to produce better coffee. I suppose the most obvious advantage to us is when the world coffee price falls below the minimum $120 or so per sack that the fair-trade organizations guarantee us. That hasn't happened in the short time since we've been working with them, thank goodness. But it provides us with an important assurance.

'The real issue is their long-term commitment to improving the quality of our coffee and the conditions of the coffee producers here. We in the co-operatives need help. With its new free-market policies the Government of Peru has pulled out of even the small amount of assistance it used to give us. We are now entirely on our own. The principles of free trade and co-operation do not, of course, rest easily together. We need help with education and healthcare for our members, with business know-how and marketing, and with improved administration.

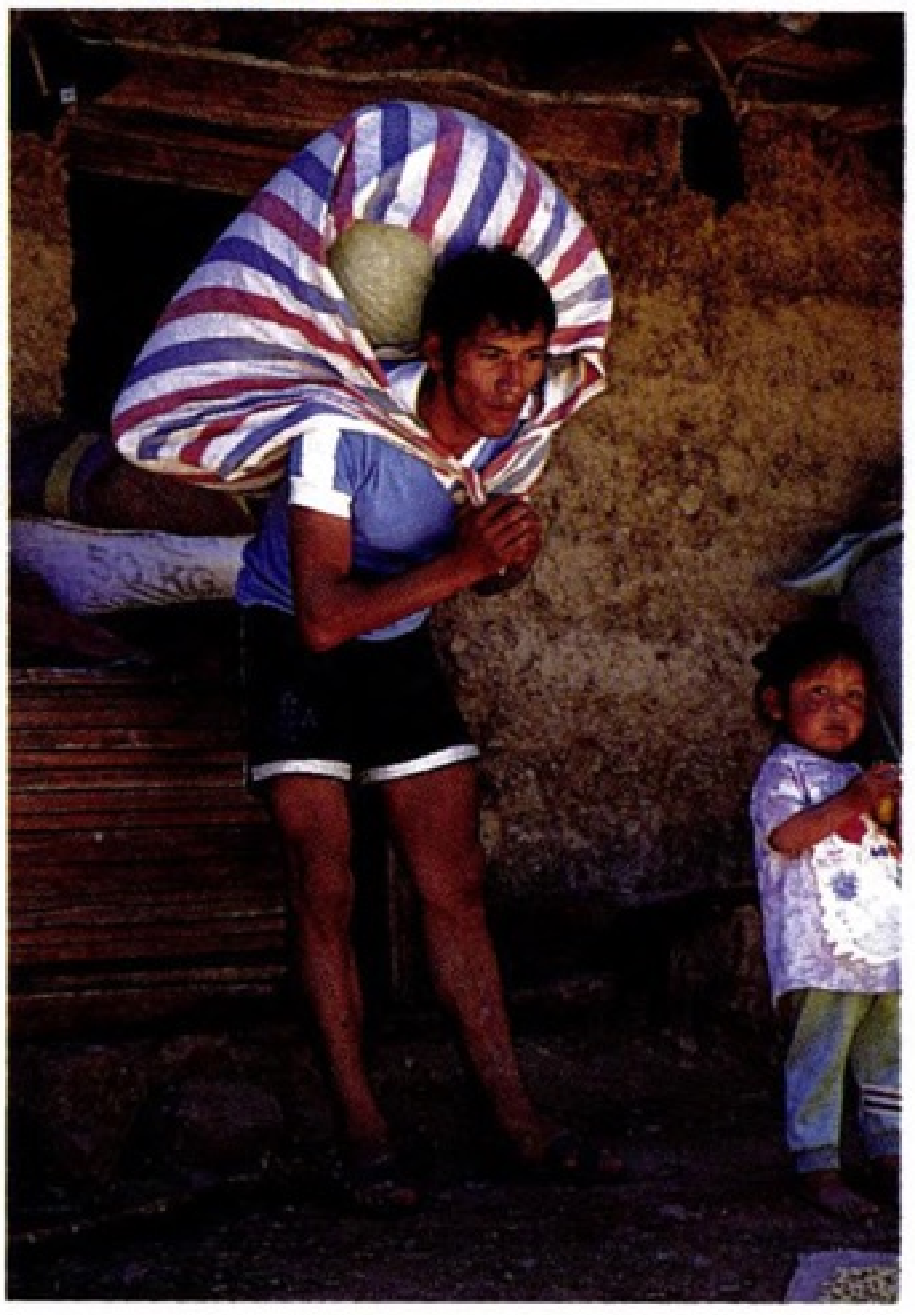
Can a trade that rewards its producers so little, that preys on their poverty in this way, be anything other than contemptible?

The 'Happy Christmas' bag and a cup of coffee approaching over a carpet of parchment beans on Victoria's farm.

'Remember Abraham, when he told you that nothing has changed in 40 years? He got it wrong, you know. It's worse now than before. With the exhaustion of our soils production has fallen. I get *half* the coffee from my *chacra* that I used to 20 years ago. But we shall never relinquish our co-operative, because we already know what it would be like without it, if we returned to the bad old days of the *comerciantes*.'

CECOVASA has done all that it possibly can to improve the position of its members. It has cut out the hated intermediaries after a prolonged and bitter struggle and taken control of coffee production. But it still has to sell the bulk of its coffee into the 'normal' trade. Forty years of hard labour have so far brought them little nearer to an escape from an international trade that impoverishes them. Nonetheless, small coffee farmers working with fair-trade organizations around the world have now begun to meet together to search for new options.

Can we, as coffee drinkers who sustain the international market, say that we have done as much? After all, the *only* thing that limits fair trade, and prevents the transformation of the coffee trade itself, is how much fairly-traded coffee we drinkers decide to buy. Even the small percentages of the market that fair trade accounts for now can have a disproportionately beneficial effect on the 'normal' trade, which



Looking up: the *cafeteleros'* burden can be lightened by fair trade.

doesn't like to lose its 'market share' to anyone. The trend towards 'gourmet' coffees, which emphasize the specific origin of the bean, indicates greater 'consumer awareness' and is another sign that change is brewing.

The question is not whether we should buy fairly traded coffee but why we buy anything else. (Quite incidentally, in the process of avoiding Nescafé we would also be recognizing Nestlé's role in pushing infant-formula milk in the South and assisting the long-running campaign against it.)

I have seen the difference fair trade makes, in Mexico as well as in Peru. When I was in Juliaca I saw how a couple of premium payments of $7,000 from Cafédirect had been used by the co-ops and their members. Small as it was, I knew how important this would be to them. A few extra dollars would help to pay school fees, or buy clothes for the children.

The minimum-price guarantee is some compensation for the collapse in 1989 of the international agreement to restrict production and maintain prices. For all its faults this agreement stabilized the market and sustained better prices, as subsequent experience has proved: when it collapsed, so did the price of coffee. In good measure this happened because the US lost its fear of 'communist subversion' and with it all interest in the fate of coffee farmers in Latin America and Africa.

The world's major coffee producers did come together in 1993 to form the Association of Coffee Producing Countries and introduce 'retention schemes' designed to control the flow of coffee onto world markets. This unprecedented solidarity has had some success in the past 18 months, but it is still too early to say that another sharp price slump may not be around the corner.

Fair trade in coffee is not, of course, entirely without its own limitations. The coffee still has to pass through the conventional roasting and retail channels. And we have to pay more in the shops for the extra cost of the better deal it gives to farmers. In this sense the trade is 'fairer' rather than 'fair'. All the farmers I spoke to felt that fair trade would eventually benefit both producers *and* consumers by reclaiming the resources that presently fall into the gulf between us. But the fair-trade movement is engaged with the principles and taking steady, practical steps to transform the situation.

My aunt, who is not given to extravagant views (or, it must be said, to drinking enormous quantities of coffee), nevertheless buys Cafédirect, the fair-traded brand that is now available in most British supermarkets. She even went to her supermarket to congratulate them for selling it. Hearing this, her friends have done the same, and are telling *their* friends. They will not be disappointed. Cafédirect is – like most of the new generation of fair-traded brands – a delicious, high-quality product with the added ingredient of information about how it is produced.

There's one thing left for Gregorio and me to do. CECOVASA is about to mark its 25th anniversary, its 'Silver Wedding'. There will be almighty celebrations in the Valley.

Among other things, the nine CECOVASA co-ops will stage a soccer tournament. I wonder whether I might not give Gregorio's San Isidro team a set of soccer shirts from England. We wander around the shopping malls of Oxford and seem to see nothing but cafés and coffee shops. Gregorio can't even find the cloth he needs to make a pair of trousers.

Eventually we stumble on a discount sportswear store. It is full of the stressed-out parents of brutish-looking boys. I take a look at the price tags. Equipping a team with shirts cannot be done for less than $1,000. This, Gregorio and I agree, is an exotic price to pay for displaying 'Manchester United', 'Liverpool' or even 'Oxford United' on the backs of the San Isidro soccer team – especially if they lose.

Meanwhile we go to London to meet Richard Hide, the coffee buyer for Twin Trading and Cafédirect. Richard is to visit the Valley later in the year. Gregorio has prepared a letter for him, asking him to become *padrino* – literally 'godfather', but perhaps more accurately 'patron' – of the festivities, and hoping that God will protect him. Why don't we present a *Twin Trading/New Internationalist Challenge Cup* for their soccer tournament? It's a fair deal.

I think of this trophy now, perched on the back of a coffee truck perhaps, ploughing through the dust of the deserts of southern Peru, rattling over the plains of the Altiplano, skirting Lake Titicaca, trundling up through the cold to the high peaks of the Andes, racing down the precipitous slopes into that most beautiful and terrifying valley of the Tambopata River, retracing the route out we took with the coffee.

'If we win the tournament we'll have a drink to celebrate,' Gregorio says to me as he slings his backpack over his shoulder and heads once more for passport control at London Airport. 'If we lose we'll have a drink to console ourselves. Either way I'll get out my harp, we'll make music and dance.'

As he leaves, the price of coffee falls below 140 US cents per pound. ■

* Subsequent experiments suggest that similar results can be obtained with even less effort by roasting the beans in a thick earthenware dish set in a hot oven for about 20 minutes. This can also be done with green beans, which are easier to find. Anyone with useful tips for readers should write to the *Curiosities* section of this magazine.

The NI Interview

Juan Pablo Ordoñez

Wayne Ellwood meets an exiled Colombian human-rights activist who is campaigning against his country's attempt to clean up poverty by killing the poor.

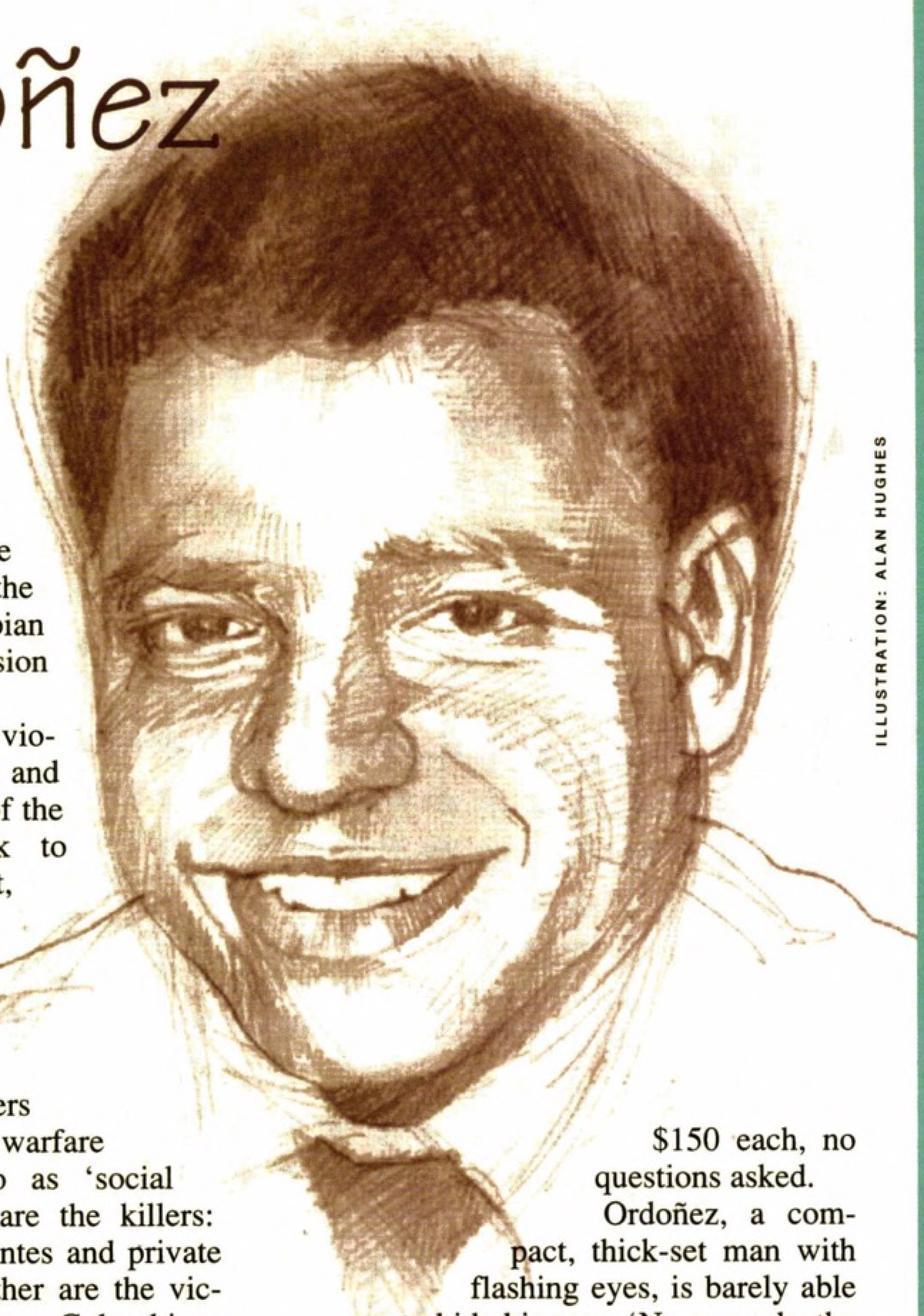


ILLUSTRATION: ALAN HUGHES

As a young lawyer in Colombia Juan Pablo Ordoñez could have had a life of wealth and ease. He had three books to his credit, a part-time teaching position at the university and was also teaching at the Judicial Police Academy in Bogota. 'I felt full of hope and was convinced I could bring justice to everyone in my country,' he sighs. He stops and shifts self-consciously in his seat for a second, then continues: 'Of course, I had much to learn.'

Ordoñez's eyes were opened suddenly late one night in 1989. Returning to the Police Academy after work he heard loud screams echoing in the hall. 'I went into the building and saw a group of police cadets and trainers beating several street people. One instructor had a stun-gun which he was demonstrating on one of the victims.' Ordoñez was shocked by what he had witnessed. But it was the attitude of one of the trainers that he found most astonishing.

'Later, in my office, when I confronted one of the senior instructors, I learned that this was a routine part of police training. They needed the victims and the easiest way to get them was to abduct them from the street.' When Ordoñez protested, the instructor dismissed his concern with a wave of the hand. '"These people are just *desechables* (disposables)," he said. I was outraged. This was the first time in my life I heard the word applied to human beings.'

Shaken by this experience, Ordoñez moved to Girardot, a few hours south of Bogota, where he became Chief of the Preliminary Investigation Unit for the Judicial Police. Violence and corruption in the police now became his obsession. When he reopened an investigation into the murders of 40 so-called 'disposables' – mostly transvestites, drug addicts and street people – he quickly found the evidence pointing to the National Police. And that's when the death threats started.

'Even police in the streets would point their fingers at me,' he recalls. A few weeks later he was attacked and severely beaten by four men outside a restaurant. When the death threats continued he fled to the US. Eventually he found his way to Washington where he became active with the Colombian Human Rights Committee (CHRC). At the same time he struggled to accept his homosexuality – a difficult task for a man from a country where homophobia and *machismo* are closely entwined. But by 1993 he was working with the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRA).

'I was interested in the violation of the rights of gays and lesbians but the old issue of the "disposables" came back to haunt me,' he says. In fact, the two issues are closely connected. Every year in Colombia hundreds of gay prostitutes – along with beggars, street kids, petty thieves and drug-users – are killed in a grim class warfare that Colombians refer to as 'social cleansing'. On one side are the killers: police death-squads, vigilantes and private security guards. On the other are the victims, those that middle-class Colombians label 'social deviants'. The killings are never investigated and rarely publicized.

In 1994 Ordoñez returned to Colombia for 11 months to gather evidence. In his research he found evidence of thousands of undocumented murders. More disturbing still, most Colombians appeared to support the killings. Ordoñez points to the violent, insecure nature of Colombian society as a key reason why the murders continue. 'This is one of the most violent countries in the world. Our murder rate is ten times that of the US. Both the police and the criminal justice system are absolutely corrupt. If you're robbed or broken into the odds are you'll never get your things back and no-one will be arrested.'

As a result shop-owners and business-people bankroll bands of hired killers, mostly police officers and soldiers, in an attempt to 'clean up' the streets. Prostitutes, beggars and others are kidnapped, murdered (often with fingertips hacked off to prevent identification) and dumped, sometimes with a crude sign around their necks – 'Death to Homosexuals' or 'Death to Thieves'.

The links between the police and their victims have taken some bizarre twists. In one case, in the city of Barranquilla, police were implicated in the murder of more than 50 slum-dwellers whose bodies were then sold to the university medical school for $150 each, no questions asked.

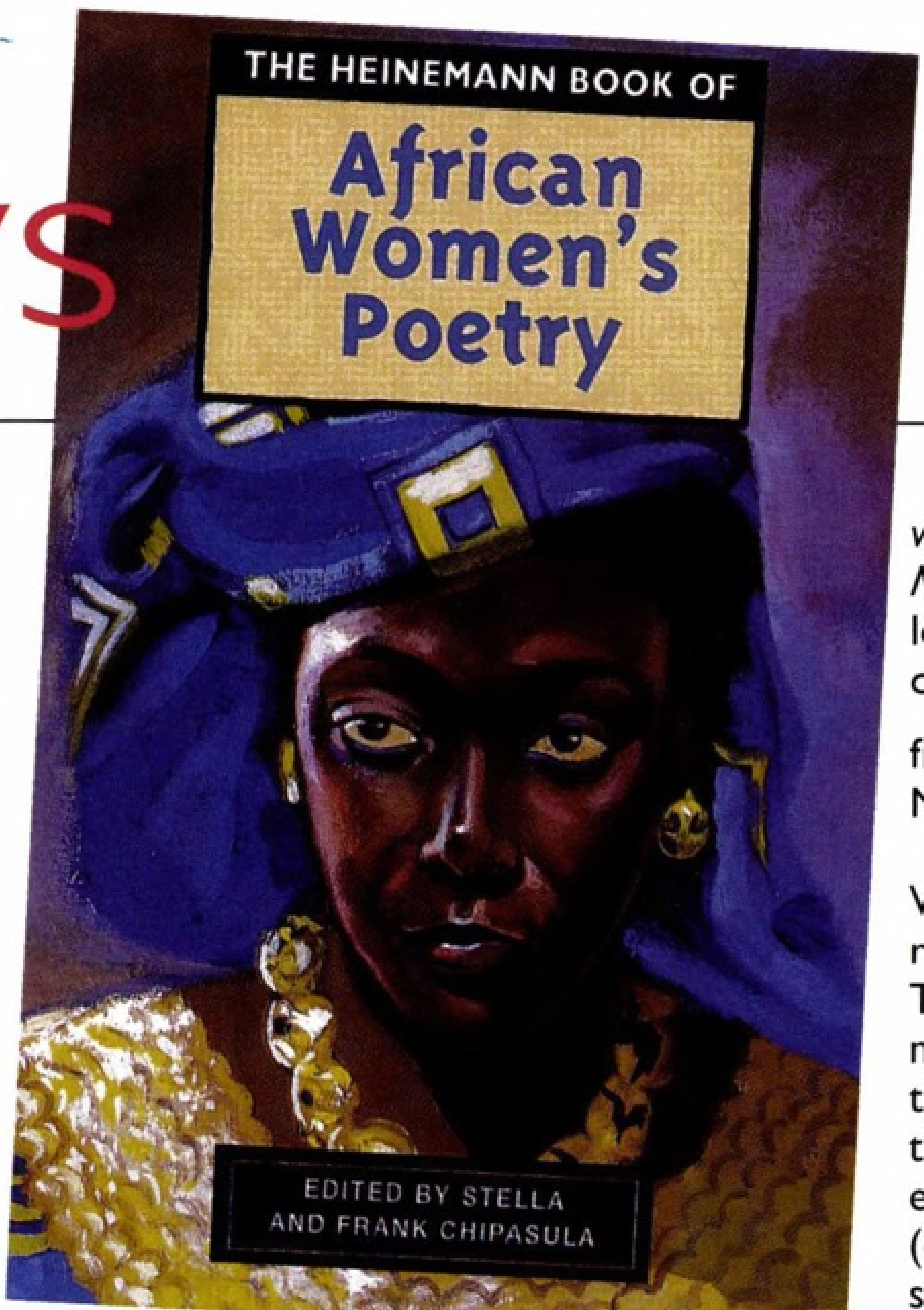
Ordoñez, a compact, thick-set man with flashing eyes, is barely able to hide his rage. 'No-one asks the basic questions,' he fumes. 'Why are so many people forced to beg and steal? It is a question too complicated for some and irrelevant to those in power.'

The simple answer, says Ordoñez, is poverty and injustice. Nearly half the country's 36 million people are poor, while just 2 per cent of the landowners hoard 40 per cent of the land. 'There is no political will to improve things,' Ordoñez claims. 'Those in power have the absolute support of the armed forces and are from the same privileged families that own most of the country.'

Determined to alert the world to these abuses, in 1994 Ordoñez set up Project Dignity for Human Rights in Colombia, a joint effort with IGLHRA and CHRC. The group's goal is to document individual cases of 'social cleansing' and to raise international attention to the issue. 'A lot can be done through international pressure,' Ordoñez stresses. 'We can link development aid to *real* improvements in human rights. If there are not changes, then we should suspend all non-humanitarian aid. These killings have to end and we all have some responsibility to stop them.' ■

Juan Pablo Ordoñez's full report on 'social cleansing', *No Human Being is Disposable*, is available from Project Dignity for Human Rights in Colombia, 3325 17th Street NW, Washington DC 20010.

Reviews



books

The Heinemann Book of African Women's Poetry

edited by **Stella** and **Frank Chipasula**
(Heinemann ISBN 0-435-90680-1)

Warm night of Mozambique
and the distant sounds of a xylophone reach me
– distant and regular –
where are they coming from? Even I do not know.
In my iron sheet and board shack
I turn on the radio that lulls me to sleep...
But voices from America stir my soul and my nerves
and it is for me that Robeson and Marian sing
Negro spirituals from Harlem
Let my people go
Oh let my people go
let my people go
they say
and I open my eyes and cannot sleep
inside me Anderson and Paul resound
not lullabies.
Let my people go.

Restlessly
I sit at the table to write
(deep inside me
oh let my people go*)*
let my people go
and now I am nothing but the instrument
of my swirling blood
Marian coming to my help
with her low voice, my sister.

I am writing
over my table familiar faces are bending
my mother with her rough hands and her face tired
with rebellions, pains, humiliations
tattooing in black the virgin white paper
and Paul that I do not know
but he is of the same blood and of the same beloved sap of Mozambique
and miseries, wire-meshed windows, the goodbyes of magaiças
cottonfields and my unforgettable white friend
and Zé my brother and Paul
and you my friend with the gentle blue look
holding my hand and making me write
with gall flowing from our rebellion.
All come and bend over my shoulder
while I am writing, from the heart of the night
Marian and Paul, watching from the radio light
let my people go
oh let my people go...

from *Let my people go* by Mozambique's Noémia de Sousa

Women poets have been scandalously under-represented in anthologies of African poetry. This excellent new collection shows just how much we have been missing. It's powerful, thoughtful, sensitive stuff. There are contributions from 40 or so poets, including Ghana's exiled Ama Ata Aidoo and Zindzi Mandela (daughter of Nelson and Winnie). The mix of styles and voices is just right – some quiet, passionate and intimate, others loud, bold and protesting. And there is a good representation of women writing in languages other than English, giving you the chance to compare the elliptical style and metaphysical sensitivities of some of the North African poets (writing originally in Arabic or French) with the open and energetic nature of some of the Southern African poets (writing in English or Portuguese). In terms of the poets' backgrounds too, the editors have gone for variety. Gwendoline C Konie is a company director and Zambia's former ambassador to the United Nations, Algeria's Leila Djabali wrote from behind bars as a political prisoner, while Gcina Mhlophe resorted to a public toilet in a Johannesburg park to write during breaks from her factory job.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆ **VB**

film

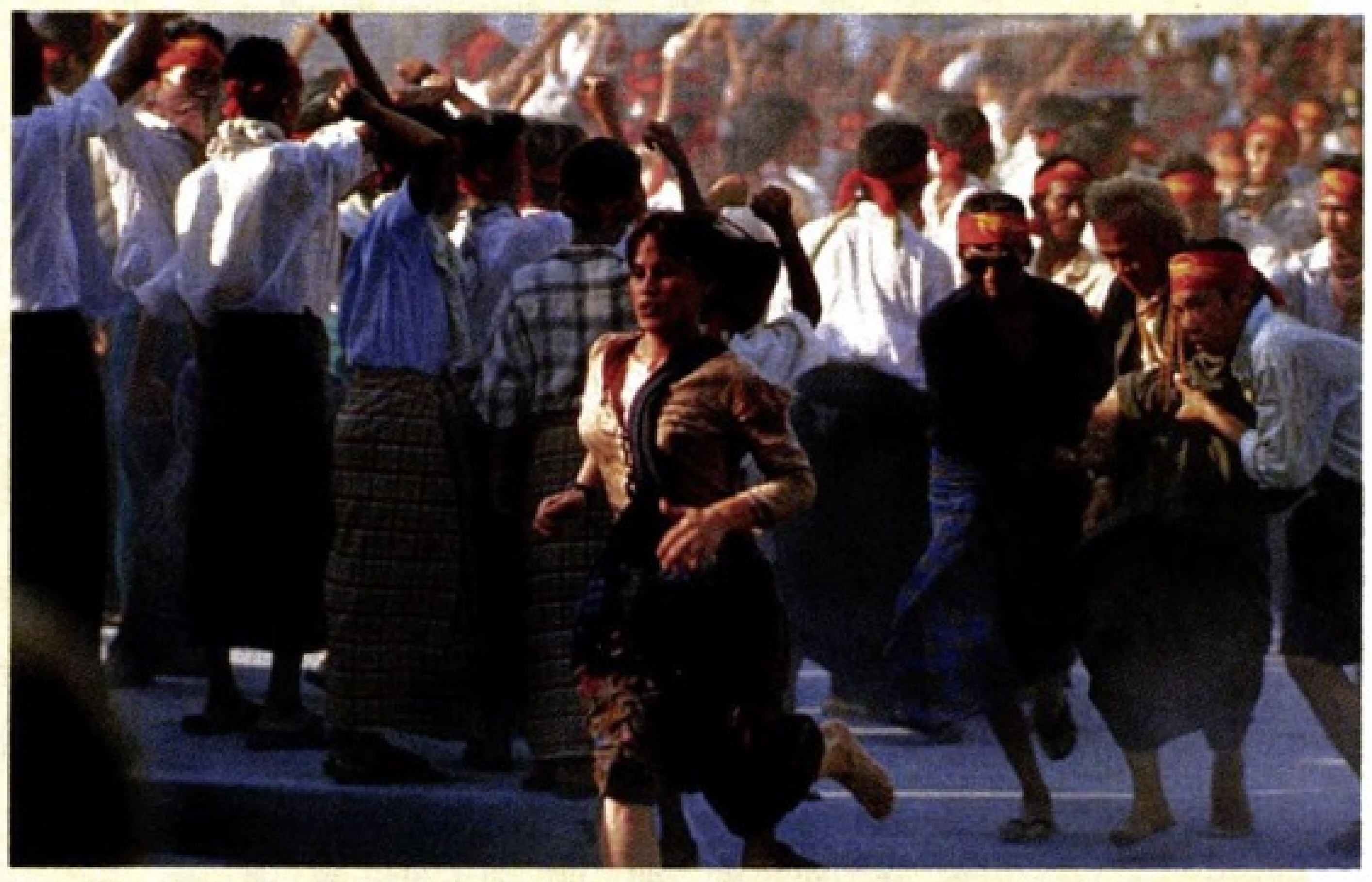
Beyond Rangoon

directed by **John Boorman**

This film is made with the best intentions with John Boorman clearly attempting to draw the world's attention to the plight of the democratic movement in Burma, whose leader Aung San Suu Kyi has only just been released after six years of detention.

But, like *The Killing Fields*, the struggle is presented through the eyes of a Western protagonist. At least in this instance, it is a woman doctor rather than the rugged, male, journalist hero of films like *Salvador* or *Under Fire*. As if to nod wryly to the latter tradition, the one American adventurer photographer to appear in this film quickly makes his exit, leaving Laura Bowman in the centre of the frame.

Set in 1988 – the year of the student uprisings against the military dictatorship, Bowman (played by Patricia Arquette) becomes caught up in events while holidaying with her sister. It transpires that Bowman's husband and young son were recently murdered and the trip has been planned to help her overcome her grief. Consequently the film is as much about her journey to recover as she comes to terms with her own personal tragedy inspired by the fortitude of those around her as it is about the country itself. Separated from her sister and the tour party when her passport is stolen, she is left behind in Rangoon where she is taken under the wing of a kindly tourist guide U Aung Ko (played by U Aung Ko) who turns out to be a former university professor and political prisoner. Soon, though, it is she who becomes his protector as he is wounded while being pursued by the army.


Set in 1988, when student protests were violently crushed by the Burmese military junta.

If **Beyond Rangoon** addresses the situation in Burma – there is even a glimpse of Aung San Suu Kyi defiantly confronting the phalanx of soldiers – it does so as an adventure story. As such it is not quite good enough, with the drama palling and Arquette unable to sustain the role. It needs to be sharp and thrilling for the message to reach a mainstream middle-America audience. *Lethal Weapon 2* – with its Afrikaner villains – did more to provoke a discussion on apartheid in South Africa than *Cry Freedom*, simply because it was watched by so many more people. What are audiences supposed to do as they leave the cinema? The situation is dire in Burma and for real change to take place we will need to look 'beyond Rangoon'.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ **LF**

The **Burma Action** campaign group can be contacted at Collins Studios, Collins Yard, Islington Green, London NI 2XU. Tel: 0171 359 7679. Fax: 0171 354 3987.

music

Kaddish

by **Towering Inferno**
(Island CID 8039 CD/MC)

Deeply moving, **Kaddish** is a record which addresses dangerous times. Described as 'the most frightening musical document' this 75-minute impressionistic journey takes us into the memory of central Europe, exploring the Holocaust and its repercussions for us all. The effect is achieved through sheer diversity. Industrial rock guitars fuse with string quartets; folk and old partisan songs with minimally-inclined piano parts. The mix and pitch is handled with delicacy. Strong sounds are used with a primeval force. They shock, while other sections impart an overwhelming sadness.

Stylistically **Kaddish** defies definition – it is not wholly jazz, rock or classical. Towering Inferno's two core members – Richard Wolfson and Andy Saunders – have assembled a variety of musicians from numerous traditions. African drummer Gaspar Lawal, the London Welsh Chorale and the peerless Hungarian folk singer Márta Sebestyéa interact with the Electra Strings quartet. Many of the texts are provided by Endre Szakarosi and his words are laden with sadness. 'The wind blows through me,' runs the lyric. 'This sky will cover you when you fall down.' Far off in the distances voices murmur, straining for audibility against the onslaught of heavy machinery.

The Kaddish – which provided Towering Inferno with their focus – is the Hebrew prayer for the dead. Sung at the end of this work it signifies many things: a mourning for the Holocaust's dead, an articulation of faith in the midst of chaos as well as, paradoxically, a secular prayer for a world which continues to tear itself apart over ancient conflicts.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆ **LG**

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews by **Lizzie Francke, Louise Gray** and **Vanessa Baird**
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

THE **CLASSIC**

Linguistic Imperialism

...being the book that all English speakers should read.

In January 1988 the British House of Lords held a debate on cultural diplomacy in which Lord St John of Fawsley (former Conservative Minister for the Arts) stated: 'If I were asked what had been this country's three greatest contributions to world civilization I should reply unhesitatingly: the common law, parliamentary government, English language and literature. And at the heart of all three lies the idea of liberty. I do not believe that we can export our institutions indiscriminately, but by informing people of how they work and flourish, by imparting thoughts about them, we can enhance the chances for freedom elsewhere.'

Robert Phillipson does not quote these extraordinary words in **Linguistic Imperialism** but he does allude to similar claims made in 1935 by the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) on the foundation of the British Council: 'Our object is to assist the largest number possible to appreciate fully the glories of our literature, our contribution to the arts and sciences, and our pre-eminent contribution to political practice. This can be best achieved by promoting the study of our language abroad.'

In both of these speeches the planned spreading of English throughout the world is directly linked to rosy political objectives of an unabashedly colonial kind. Phillipson's argument in **Linguistic Imperialism** rests on the well-established thesis that colonialism has not come to an end but is today largely prosecuted by non-military means. What is original about his treatise is that it provides the first systematic examination of the enormous significance of language to most neo-colonial enterprises. He considers the role of language important enough to merit the development of a new concept, 'linguicism', which he sees as important as that of racism.

TEFL in Indonesia

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS

Linguicism, for Phillipson, is an assembly of 'ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language'.

One important aspect of linguicism is the teaching of English as a foreign and second language and its maintenance as a 'national' language in communities whose mother tongue is not English. Phillipson explores the complex political and economic history behind the astonishingly successful attempts to make English a 'world' language – but his intention in doing so is to change this state of affairs. He demonstrates the cultural, social and psychological damage inflicted by the fallacies of the English language teaching profession.

The main problem with English, he says, is the monolingual emphasis with which it is taught. This has the effect not only of downgrading the mother tongues of learners, but of tragically undervaluing the rich multilingualism which is typical of most of the developing world. Fallaciously identified with modernity, progress, freedom, civilization and reason, English commands monumental financial, official and popular backing in parts of the globe where its role is dubious. As a result indigenous languages 'are not accorded enough resources to develop so that the same functions could be performed in them'.

One reason for this is that decision-making élites in developing countries have usually been persuaded to share the interests of their neo-colonial patrons. Sir Anthony Parsons, former Foreign Policy adviser to Margaret Thatcher, stated this policy without disguise and was quoted by the British Council in a recruitment brochure of 1988: 'It is really dazzlingly obvious. If you are thoroughly familiar with someone else's language and literature, if you know and love the country, the arts, the people, you will be instinctively disposed to buy goods from them rather than a less well-known source, to support them actively when you consider them to be right and to avoid criticizing them too fiercely when you regard them as being in the wrong.' This makes the massive annual enlistment of international students by British universities seem a much less disinterested and beneficent process than their prospectuses could ever intimate.

I find Phillipson's book peculiarly challenging because I teach English Studies in one of those universities. Indeed, I have recently been asked as part of my job to act as a consultant to the English programme of a Middle Eastern University, to which I am about to be flown for five days as a visiting 'expert' at the British Council's expense. **Linguistic Imperialism** thus strikes at the very roots of my everyday life. I know well the personal temptation to concentrate on the purely 'professional' tasks in hand and to neglect to consider the ideological purposes of a job like mine. Phillipson analyses the convenient disconnection of educational practice from the political and economic ends it serves – what he calls the divorce of 'culture' from 'structure'. By reminding us that these two things are really indissoluble, and that educationalists have accordingly a moral duty to rethink what they do, **Linguistic Imperialism** acts as the bad conscience of an ideological project which has so often been depicted in glowingly innocent terms. It should be recommended to anyone convinced of the 'superiority' of the English language, or of the necessity of its universal dissemination. ■

Macdonald Daly

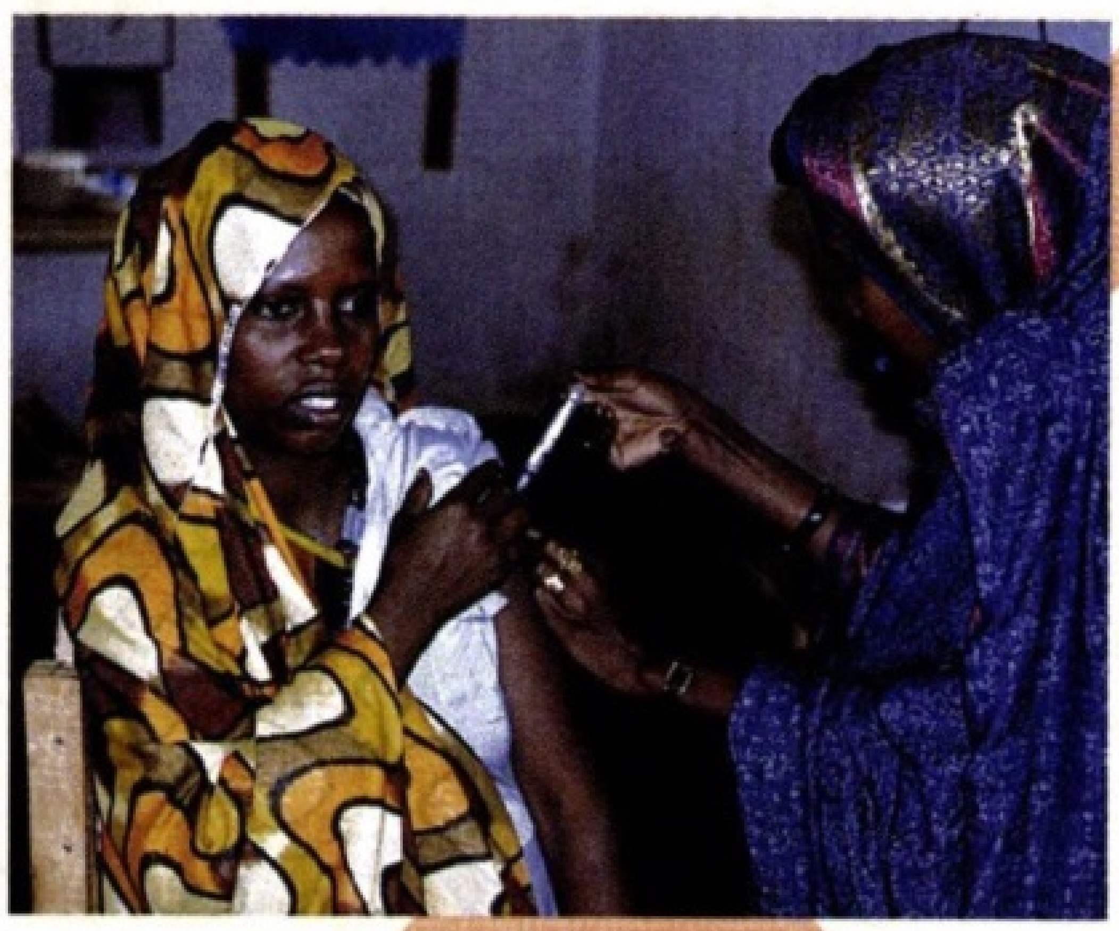
***Linguistic Imperialism** by **Robert Phillipson** is published by Oxford University Press, 1992.*

Curiosities

QUESTIONS THAT HAVE ALWAYS INTRIGUED YOU ABOUT THE WORLD WILL APPEAR IN THIS, YOUR SECTION, AND BE ANSWERED BY OTHER READERS. PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS TO 'CURIOSITIES'.

What evidence is there that children vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella at an early age will enjoy lasting immunity? What is the risk of their developing these diseases in later life, when they can be more serious?

● According to Dr Robert Mendelson: 'The risks associated with measles vaccine are unacceptable, even if there were convincing evidence that the vaccine works. There is not. In 1900 there were 13.3 measles deaths per 100,000 population (US figures). By 1955 – before the first measles vaccination – the death rate had already declined by 97.7 per cent to only 0.03 deaths per 100,000 of population.'


VANESSA BAIRD

Avoiding the real issue of poverty.

A disturbing feature of measles, mumps and rubella vaccination is the shift to older age groups who are more susceptible to complications. Not only have measles cases frequently been higher in years following the introduction of vaccination, but also more adults are contracting measles (*Journal of American Medicine,* 1976). In the pre-vaccine era 90 per cent of all measles patients were aged five to nine years; after the vaccine was introduced 55-64 per cent were over ten.

One study found evidence of a relationship between lack of rash in measles and increased evidence of degenerative and auto-immune diseases (*Lancet,* 5 Jan 1995). There have been several reports of the link between arthritis and rubella vaccine in medical literature.

In 'Third World' countries, malnutrition-complicated measles kills around two million children a year. In the 1987 study (*British Medical Journal* No. 294) measles mortality in a Tanzanian hospital was halved by prescribing Vitamin A supplements.

Vaccination is another example of unproved but profitable technology foisted on an uninformed population. It avoids the real issues of injustice and malnutrition.

Further information is available from Vaccine Information, PO Box 43, Hull HU1 1AA, England (please include stamps or small donation).

Patrick Holdsworth
Hull, England

When visiting England last year I found the population debate was all about 'enabling women in the Third World' to have fewer children. I find England over-populated. What's to be done about it?

● The latest proposed strategies include:

- Moving all people over retirement age to the greener and more spacious land of Aotearoa/ New Zealand.
- Limiting the permitted number of children to 0.7 per couple (it is as yet unclear which 30 per cent of the child will not be permitted).
- Levelling the Pennines to provide more land to stretch out in and raw material which can be used to fill in those awkward wriggly bits around the coastline.

D Phillips
Leeds, England

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

How would the introduction of a single European currency affect countries of the South?

Isabel Milner
London, England

Given that the profit from slave labour in today's terms is a staggering $187,500 million, is there any legal precedence for this money to be repaid as a legacy to the living descendants of such slaves?

Lloyd Jeffers
Worthing, England

Does anyone know what happened to the proposal by an African scientist (I'm afraid I do not recall his name) to provide refugee camps in Zaire with efficient small ovens that could be mass-produced from scrap metal in a nearby town, thus reducing the burning of wood by a huge percentage?

Daphne Morgan
Southampton, England

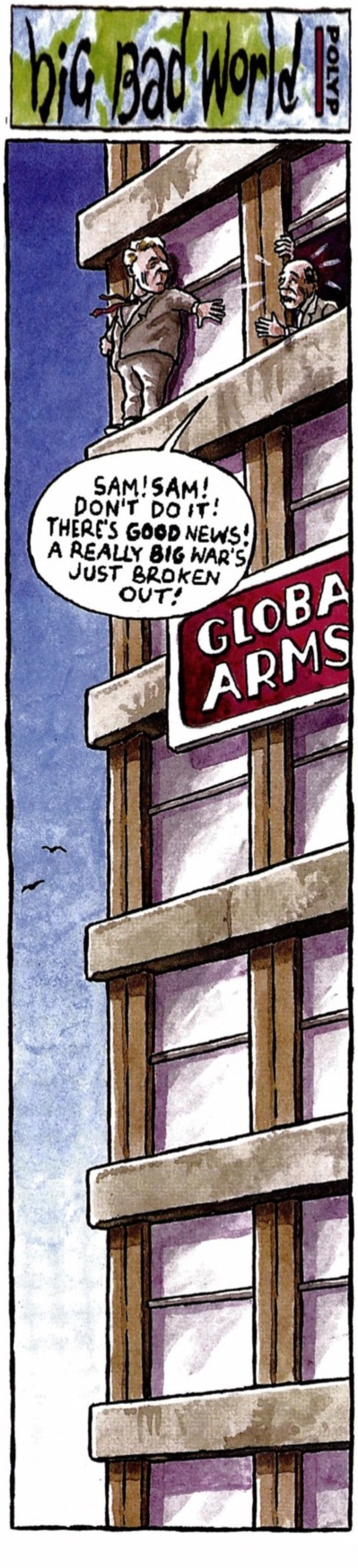
What are the benefits or disadvantages of adding fluoride to tap water?

CE Clarke
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Are there any cultures in the world where there is never any reason to exchange gifts?

James Phillips
Wigston, England

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ANSWERS PLEASE SEND THEM TO **CURIOSITIES, NEW INTERNATIONALIST, 55 RECTORY ROAD, OXFORD OX4 1BW, UK,** OR TO YOUR LOCAL NI OFFICE (SEE INSIDE FRONT COVER FOR ADDRESSES).


big Bad World
POLYP
SAM! SAM! DON'T DO IT! THERE'S GOOD NEWS! A REALLY BIG WAR'S JUST BROKEN OUT!
GLOBA
ARMS

ENDPIECE

Mickey Mouse Hinduism

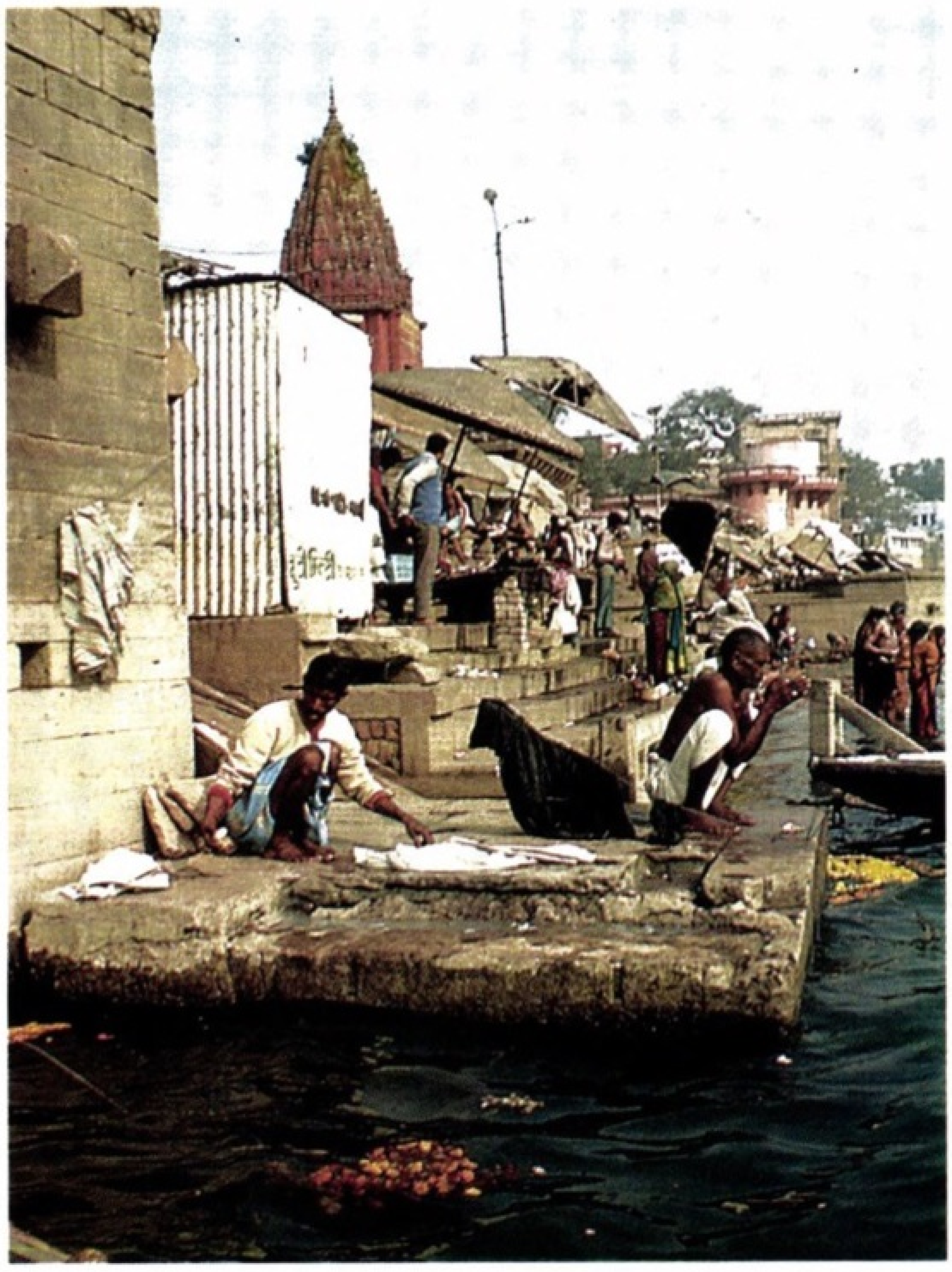
Priest or pop star? Rama or Rambo? **Sara Chamberlain** finds an ancient religion being pushed away from spirituality by the disco-beat of Western consumerism.

My thoughts, as I slipped down the Ganges past eerie, shadow-shrouded palaces under a yellow-rimmed full moon, were drifting backwards through time.

A rickety two-storey barge lit by ghostly neon lights bore down on my small canoe. Fifty young men were feverishly gyrating, hip to hip, on its roof. I stared at their ecstatic faces in disbelief. A floating disco on India's most sacred river, and in the holy city of Benares to boot! The cheap sensuality of a Hindi film song drowned the sounds of temple bells. This was modern Indian youth culture brazenly asserting itself in the face of Hindu tradition.

Hinduism encompasses a broad spectrum of different sects, a vast array of gods and goddesses and an even more varied collection of adherents. Some say there are almost as many Hinduisms as there are Hindus. It has withstood the threat of alternative systems of belief for over three thousand years. But now certain popular aspects of the religion seem to be mutating. 'Mickey Mouse Hinduism' is evolving in response to modern Western influences.

Because of the pervasive influence of satellite television, many Hindu teenagers want to dance like Michael Jackson, look like supermodels and have sex before marriage. They want to drink and smoke, to break out of their families and go on dates. However, Hinduism still has a powerful hold over Indian society and, at least for the moment, most young Indians can't reject its norms completely.



The tide of Western consumerism washes even the most sacred shores of the Ganges.

ALAN HUGHES

Ceremonies provide the framework for socializing in Hindu society. The village comes together each evening at the temple to give praise, to gossip, complain, commiserate and even fall in love. Similarly, the births, marriages and triumphs of the gods and goddesses are an opportunity for Hindus to eat, drink and celebrate. In the past, there seems to have been an harmonious relationship between socializing and devotion. Temple compounds buzzed with gossip, but during the *arti* (fire ritual) all mundane interests were submerged in communal worship. Private rituals and *pujas* in many rural temples still retain this fragile balance between the sacred and the profane.

Hinduism is a way of life as well as a religion. Young Hindus unable to break from tradition are bringing their consumer instincts and increasingly explosive sexuality to their parents' festivals and ceremonies. As a result Rama is beginning to resemble Rambo and, blaring from temple loudspeakers, comes disco music rather than religious chant.

A thousand miles away and 13 hours by bus is Kulu in the Himalayas. High in an autumn-streaked valley, Kulu during the *Dussera* festival ijs the bustling meeting-place of the regions' gods and their devotees. Emerging from my hotel room I became submerged in a sea of temporary canvas stalls. Crowds of excited shoppers searched through mountains of sweaters while film music blared and young men drank tea and gambled. This was a harvest festival of sorts – but where were the deities and their devotees? I left the tent city in search of religiosity and ritual. Instead I discovered an amusement park, a circus and a zoo. Ferris wheels jerkily revolved, tinsel flags flapped and men sold cotton candy and balloons.

I began to wonder if this festival had any spiritual content at all. Street entertainers, magicians and musicians have always played a part in India's religious festivals, but my doubts intensified that night when I watched a Hindi pop star sing to an immense crowd of drunken young men. The next day I watched an animal sacrifice which seemed devoid of any spirituality. As the sacrificial bulls' head fell into the mud, the audience screamed just as they had the night before, at the rock concert. Priest and pop star seemed synonymous.

Five months later I travelled to the *Kumbha mela* in Ujiain. The *Kumbha mela* is perhaps the largest religious festival in the world. When I arrived, traffic had come to a standstill, flags flew from a sea of multicoloured canvas tents and naked, ash-covered *sadhus* (holy men) rode elephants through the streets.

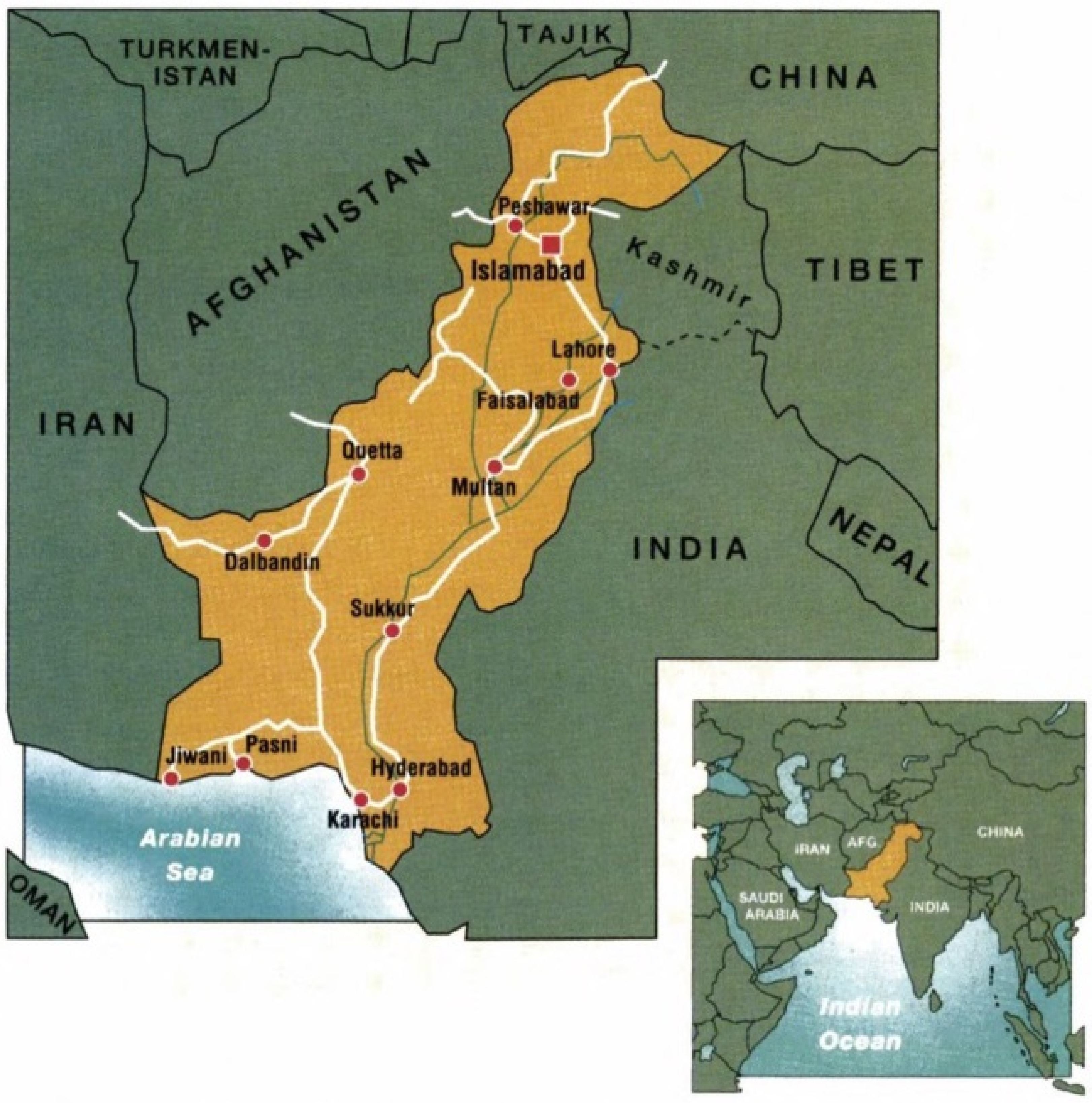
Unfortunately there was also a Ferris wheel, numerous stalls selling bangles, earrings and lipstick, carts selling plastic toys, and disco music blasting from all directions. Many of the pilgrims resembled day-trippers to Disney Land. Children clutched pinwheels and ate cotton candy while their mothers smeared on different-coloured lipsticks and inspected a staggering array of cotton bras. For them the *Khumba mela* was a shopping spree sanctioned by religion. The atmosphere was one of commerce and materialism rather than transcendence and devotion. Many of the young male pilgrims were drunk, walking round in large, rowdy groups, swearing and yelling. They leered at girls and seemed to lack any respect for the religious men they were supposed to be honouring.

Indian society might benefit if certain Hindu traditions were disregarded. Many Indian women would be happier without the dowry system and untouchables long for the constitutional abolition of caste to become a social reality. But in my opinion, Indian culture will lose one of its most vibrant and inspirational components if Hinduism disintegrates into a charade of super-hero gods and shopping-arcade festivals. ■

Sara Chamberlain has spent half her life in India. She is currently working on a forest-friendly paper campaign for the Earth Island Institute, San Francisco.

Country profile

Pakistan



'A*RISE! Awake the poor of my world from slumber, shake down to the foundations the palaces of the affluent, the epoch of people's rule is about to dawn...'* Back in 1931 poet Muhammad Iqbal's dream was not just of liberation from British colonial rule but also of an independent Pakistan (Land of the Pure). When the subcontinent was carved up 16 years later, East and West Pakistan were created as Muslim homelands. But it was hardly a dream come true.

The massacres of Partition left up to a million dead. In less than 50 years Pakistan has fought three bitter wars with India, two over Kashmir and the third a humiliating defeat after which, in 1973, East Pakistan became Bangladesh. The world's ninth most populous country, its 120 million people are linked by one common bond: Islam.

But the bond is showing signs of strain. Sectarian and ethnic violence has swept across the country and the cities have become hotbeds of violent crime. The drugs and gun trades have also rocketed since three-and-a-half million refugees from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan arrived in 1979. Even in rural areas, where 87 per cent of people live, the apparent serenity of life is deceptive: the landless majority is trapped in poverty by a strict feudal system.

Since the death in 1948 of its first leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan has been ruled by the whims of its dictatorial rulers, whether elected or not; most notably the charismatic Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the notorious General Zia ul-Haq.

Bhutto was both adored and despised. A keen socialist, he began by nationalizing banks and industry and introducing popular social reforms. But paranoia soon set in and he started allying himself with wealthy landowners and industrialists: after the 1977 elections, accusations of fraud and corruption led to riots and then to martial law.

Zia ul-Haq was waiting in the wings. He hanged Bhutto for murder and ruled for the next 11 years, steering the country towards strict Islamic rule. Zia banned political parties and introduced repressive laws like the Hudood and Zina Ordinance, under which a woman can only prove rape if she provides four Muslim male witnesses. Without such proof she faces imprisonment for adultery.

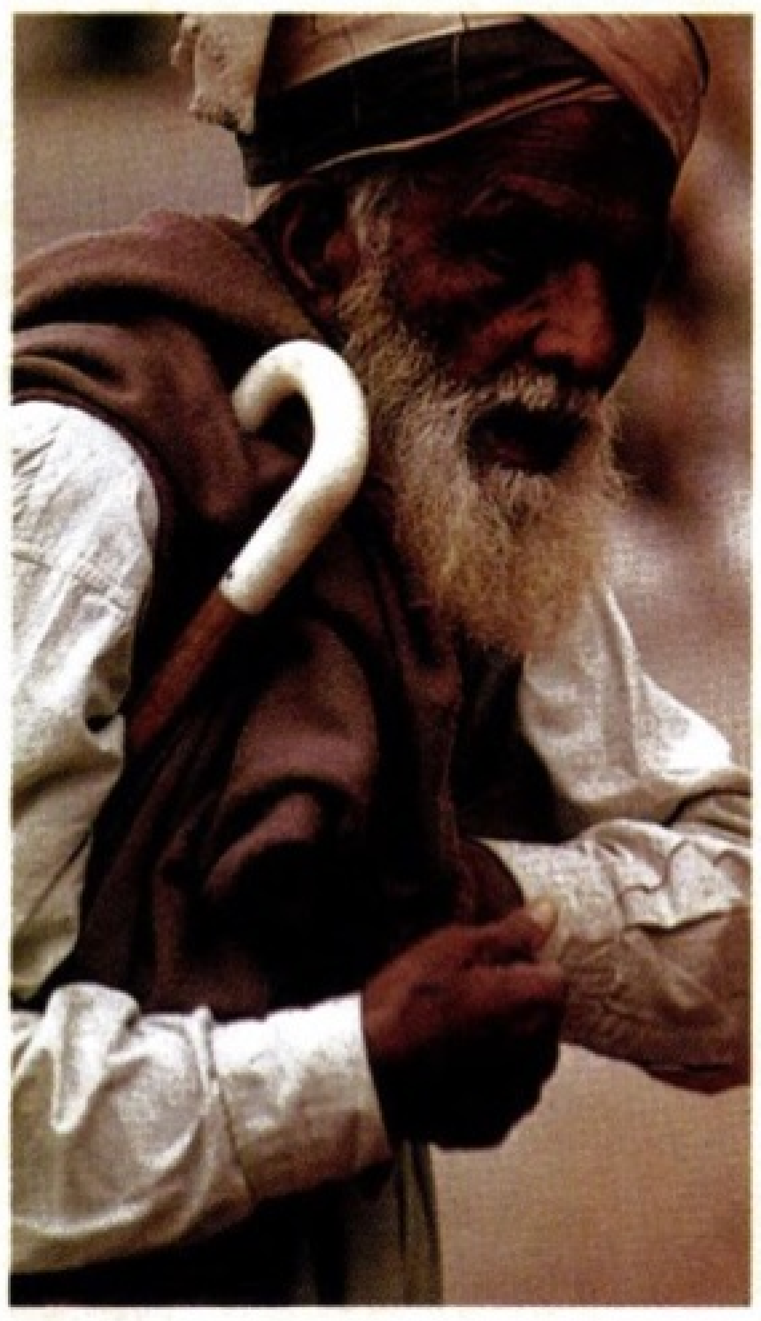
It was in such a climate that Bhutto's ambitious daughter, Benazir, returned from exile in 1988. Following Zia's assassination, she was elected the first woman head of a Muslim state, though her government dissolved in 1990 amid allegations of corruption and nepotism.

Benazir was re-elected in 1993 but has so far failed to repeal any of Zia's oppressive legislation. Nor has she opposed the Shariah Court ruling that anyone defiling the Holy Prophet's name must be imprisoned for life.

Women's groups and minorities feel betrayed, accusing her of trying to appease the small but influential religious right. Meanwhile basic education and healthcare, clean drinking water and proper sanitation have become nothing more than pipedreams for the country's poor. ■

Maria del Nevo

AT A GLANCE


TOMAS SENNETT

Leader Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto

Economy GNP per capita $420 (US $23,240).
Monetary unit: Pakistani rupee
Main exports: Cotton (60%), rice
Main imports: Machinery and transport equipment, oil, manufactured goods
The economy depends on agriculture (27% of GDP, compared with industry's 17%) and was badly damaged by major floods that hit the cotton crop in 1992. The processing and manufacture of cotton goods is the main industrial activity.

People 128.1 million. Population density ranges from 230 per sq km in Punjab to 13 per sq km in Baluchistan (UK 235 per sq km).

Health Infant mortality 95 per 1,000 live births (Canada, 7 per 1,000). One doctor for every 2,940 inhabitants (Australia, one for every 436).

Culture *Religion:* 97% Muslim, the vast majority Sunni; 2% Hindu.
Languages: Urdu is the national language although it is only spoken by about 9% of people. The provincial languages of Punjabi, Sindhi and Pushtu are the most commonly used.

Sources: *State of the World's Children 1995; The World: A Third World Guide 1995/96; Asia & Pacific Review 1993/94.*

Previously profiled August 1985

NI star rating	
EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★
Vast gap between rich and poor.
1985 ★★

SELF-RELIANCE ★★★
Dependent on cotton but food production is generally good. Would be more self-reliant if it did not spend 35% of its budget on defence.
1985 ★★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★
Patriarchal and feudal culture along with recent Islamization impose restrictions. *Purdah* is still widely observed.
1985 ★★

LITERACY ★
35%. Primary-school enrolment 42%.
1985 ★★

FREEDOM ★★
Despite formal democracy, little progress has been made on human rights since martial law. Journalists, political activists and religious minorities remain vulnerable.
1985 ★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★
59: compared with a regional average of 56 and a rich-world average of 76.
1985 ★★

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★
Benazir Bhutto spearheaded the movement for the restoration of democracy. Whether she is boxed in by her coalition government or has insufficient will, she has done little to restore full democratic and human rights, let alone address the needs of the poor and the women she might have represented.

Who Runs the World?

Over the past three years thousands of Christian Aid campaigners have helped to put fair-trade products on to supermarket shelves. By lobbying retailers and buying 'people-friendly' products they have become part of a movement calling for global economic justice. They are demonstrating that campaigning makes a difference.

2 037756 0076370

'What's the real cost of your shopping trip'. An image used in Christian Aid's press advertising campaign about unfair trade.

The problem of unfair trade and economic injustice is now being tackled on a second front. 'Who Runs the World?' is the title of Christian Aid's campaign on the World Bank and the IMF (the International Monetary Fund). The campaign continues the call for economic justice as it challenges the policies of these two international organisations – policies that contribute to economic hardship and unfair trading relationships.

World Bank and IMF advice to country after country in the Third World has been to boost exports like coffee or cocoa. The predictable results have been gluts in these commodities and slumps in their prices – leaving developing countries no better off than before. Poor farmers are forced to produce more to earn even less.

Where the production of food for local people should be a priority, cash crops for export earnings have taken over. The advice of the IMF is for some developing countries to export high value crops such as carnations or green beans. While in the same countries poor people, without access to land or who cannot afford to buy food, go hungry.

These measures are all part of World Bank and IMF SAPs, or Structural Adjustment Programmes. SAPs are designed to help countries grow by making exports a priority, devaluing their currency and cutting government expenditure. This often means that health and education services suffer because of government cuts, while the price of imported food, petrol and medicine rises because of a weaker currency. Under these policies the poorest often suffer the most.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu is backing Christian Aid's campaign. "We ask now of those who run the World bank and IMF, that these two bodies should reflect the views of the victims of an unjust economic order," he says.

In an unfair trading world, the policies of the IMF and World Bank are making things even more unfair. Christian Aid is campaigning for a just world where the well-being of people are the priority of economic policies, where they are given their right to participate and contribute in the development of their societies and ours.

You can get involved by asking for a free 'Who Runs the World?' pack. Contact Fleur Anderson on 0171 620 4444 ext 2264 or write to her at Photo petition (NI), Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT.

Registered charity no. 258003.

I want to help challenge the policies of the IMF and World Bank that make world trade even more unfair. Please rush me my 'Who Runs the World?' pack.

Name ____________________

Address ____________________

____

Postcode ____________ Tel ____________

Return this coupon to Fleur Anderson, Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT.

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NORTH AMERICAN ADVERTISERS: $2.50 per word. Minimum order 30 words – $75. Please contact: Ian McKelvie at Box 506, Osgoode, Ontario KOA 2WO. Tel/Fax: (613) 826-1003.

SAY NO TO ALL WAR Join the Anglican Communion's movement for peace. Write: *Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, 11, Weavers End, Hanslope, Milton Keynes, MK19 7PA UK. Tel: (01666) 825249. (A registered charity) New Zealand: A.P.F., 332 West Tamaki Road, Glenn Innes Auckland 6. USA: Episcopal Peace Fellowship, PO Box 28156, Washington DC 20038.*

WATCH OUT FOR 'HALF THE SKY', a documentary on women in China by Chinese woman director Shu Sunyun, which will be screened on Channel Four on September 3rd to coincide with the UN Fourth World Conference on Women taking place in Beijing.

Spiritual Internationalism

What a divisive factor in human affairs is 'national' i.e. denominational and sectarian, religion. Would it not be wonderful if religionists all over the world could discover the similarities in their religions instead of their differences and get together as normal, kindly human beings, tolerant of whatever different forms of religious expression they might adhere to. Better even than that there is the Religion of Truth from which all sectarian religions sprang. It is the Ancient Wisdom or in modern terms Theosophy.

Like to know more? *Write to -*

The Blavatsky Trust, (N1)
Avalon, Little Weston, Yeovil,
Somerset BA22 7HP.

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SERVAS suggests that you may foster international peace by becoming a traveller and/or host in its worldwide network of international hospitality and friendship. Please send a stamped addressed envelope. *North America and Canada: US Service Committee NI, 11 John Street, Room 706, New York, NY 10038. Australia: Servas Australia NI, 16 Cavill Court, Vermont South, Vic. 3133. Rest of the world: Servas International NI, PO Box 1035 Edinburgh EH3 9JQ, UK.*

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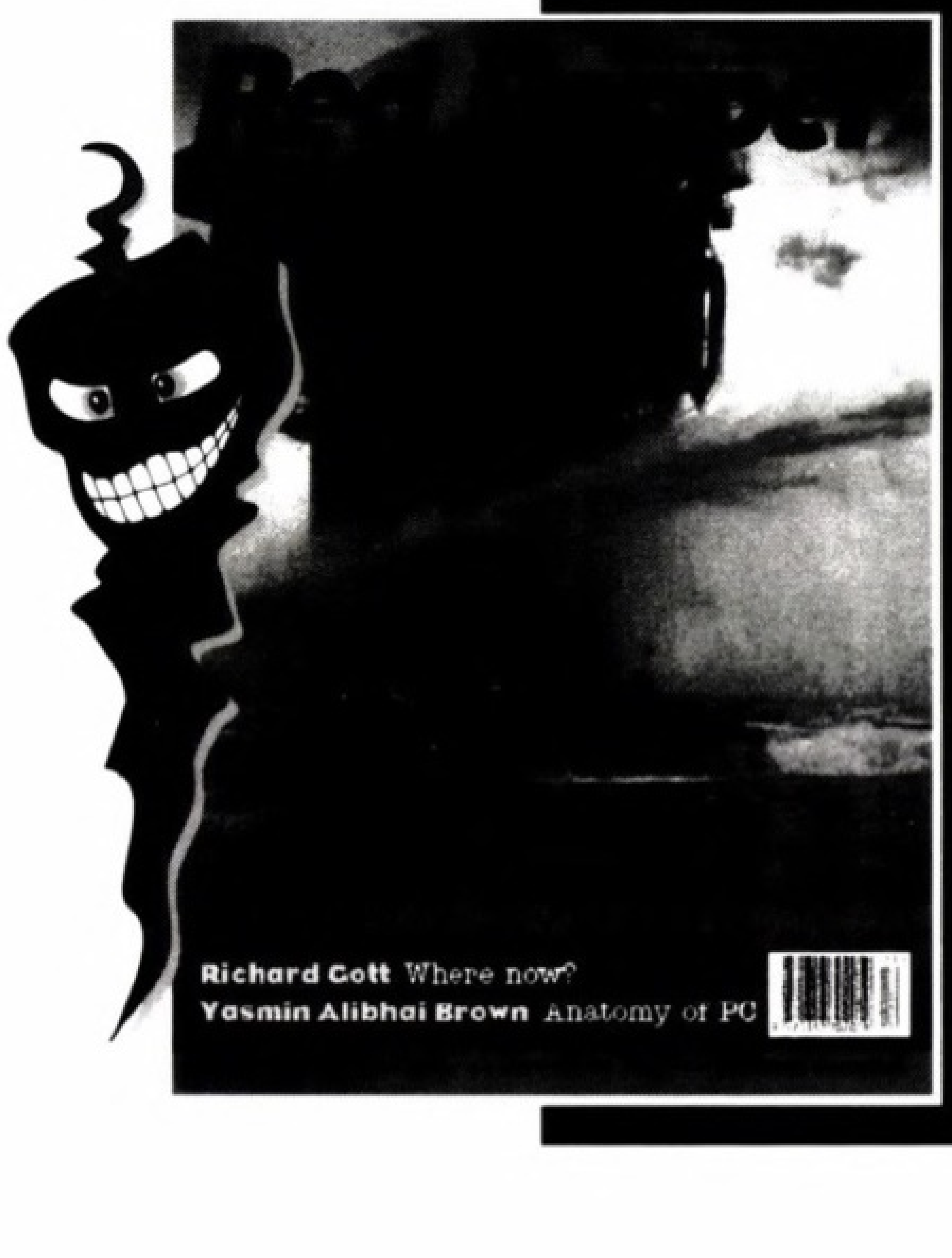

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NI

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....
.... Postcode ....
Daytime phone number ....
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Message from ....
(provide alternative greeting of up to 15 words if required)
Quantity of cards .... Amount £ ....
(Minimum of 100 & multiples of ten only) (Please include £3.50 delivery charge)
Price 85p per card (minimum order 100 cards).
Delivery charge of £3.50. A receipted invoice will be sent with your cards.
● Please charge my credit card. Faxed credit card orders are acceptable.
Tick appropriate box: ☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ ACCESS
My card number is: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
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The Season's Greetings
and
All Good Wishes for the
Coming Year

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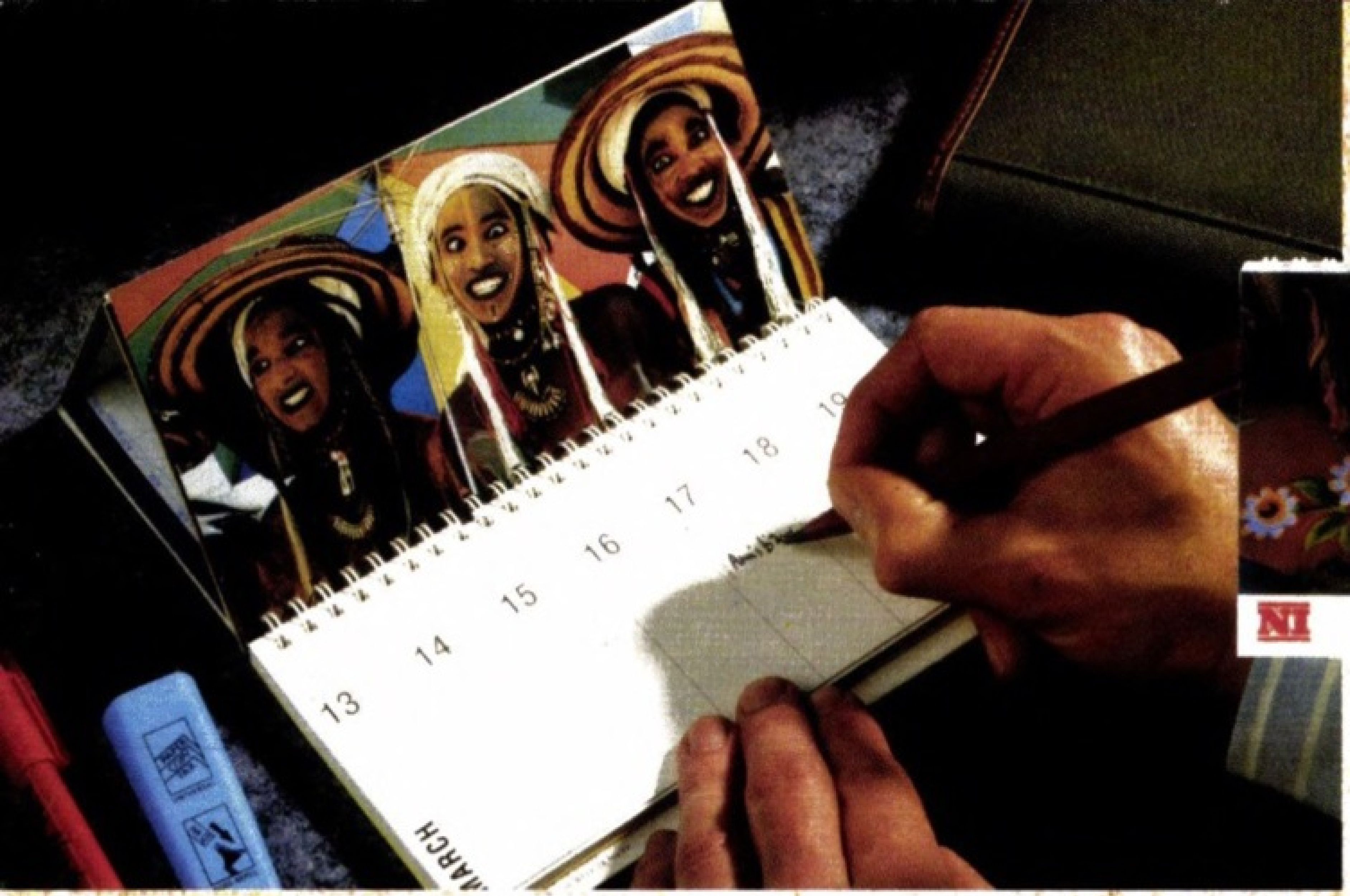

The 1996 NI One World Almanac

NI
1996 ONE WORLD ALMANAC

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1996
World in your
kitchen
calendar
June
Argentina

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World Music
THE ROUGH GUIDE

BOOK

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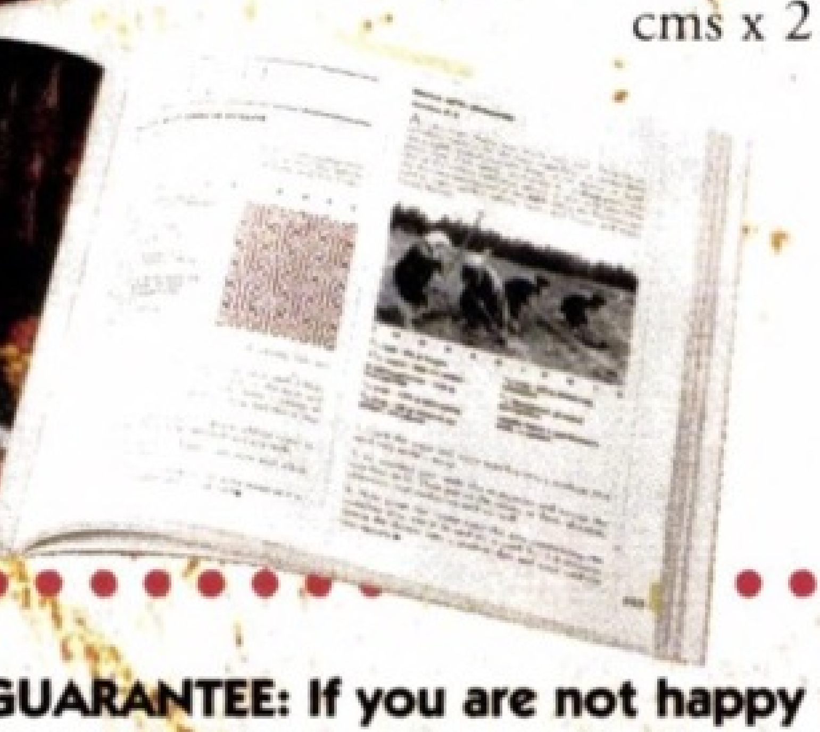

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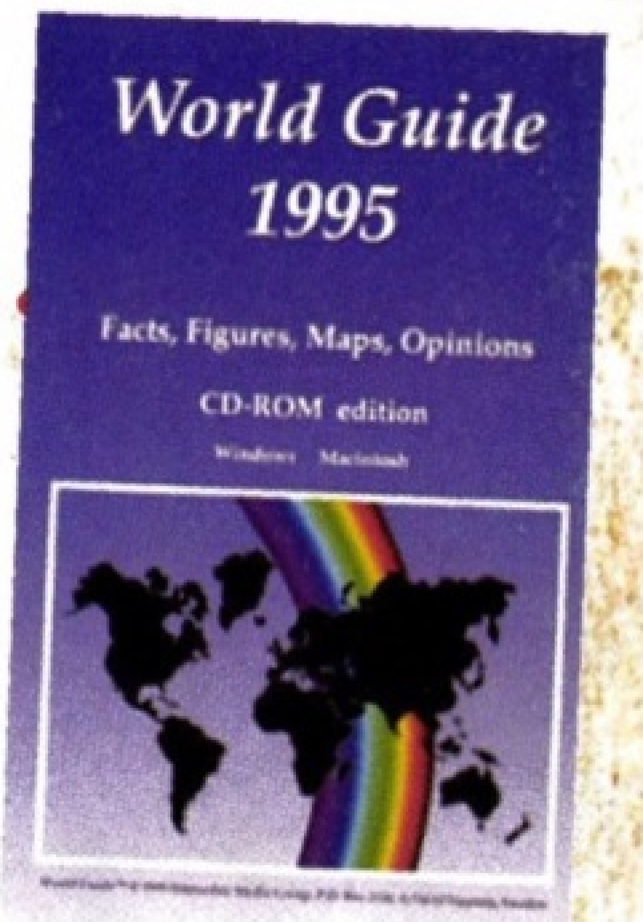
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